# UK backs Morocco’s autonomy plan for Western Sahara to boost green hydrogen ambitions



The United Kingdom has recently announced its support for Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara, a notable shift in its foreign policy that may have far-reaching implications both politically and economically. This move is viewed against the backdrop of Morocco potentially becoming a significant player in the renewable energy sector, particularly as green hydrogen emerges as a pivotal resource in Europe’s energy transition.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy, during a visit to Rabat, asserted that Morocco’s autonomy proposal represents the most "credible, viable and pragmatic" solution to the decades-long territorial conflict over Western Sahara. For nearly fifty years, this region has been contested, with Morocco maintaining claims of sovereignty while the Polisario Front, backed by Algeria, fights for independence. The UK's endorsement aligns the country with the United States and France, both of which have previously supported Morocco's stance, although it is likely to complicate relations with Algeria significantly.

This policy change marks a departure from the UK’s historically neutral position, which had characterised the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. The UK government articulated its shift through the lens of its "progressive realism" approach to foreign policy, indicating a prioritisation of strategic alliances and economic interests. The endorsement not only reflects evolving diplomatic relationships but also highlights the UK's commitment to enhancing economic ties with Morocco, particularly in sectors including renewable energy, healthcare, and infrastructure—areas that have gained increased importance as Morocco prepares to co-host the 2030 World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal.

Recent agreements between the UK and Morocco underscore the growing economic interdependence, with a focus on renewable energy initiatives such as Morocco's ambitious green hydrogen projects in Dakhla. This region is garnering attention for its robust renewable energy potential, with several projects lining up that promise substantial job creation and infrastructure development. One key initiative is the White Dunes project, a colossal $2 billion enterprise designed to produce green hydrogen with a staggering 25 gigawatts of combined capacity from wind and solar installations, aiming to commence production by 2030. This highlights Morocco's strategic vision of positioning itself as a renewable energy hub, especially at a time when Europe is striving to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

Moreover, the endorsement can be perceived as an opportunity for British firms to access preferential treatment in Morocco's burgeoning renewable sector. Foreign investments are increasingly directed toward projects aimed at transforming Dakhla into a green industrial zone, which is anticipated to manufacture solar photovoltaic panels and wind turbine components. This development not only addresses the energy needs of Europe but could also catalyse significant economic advancements for Morocco.

While the UK’s change in policy has met with approval from Morocco and its supporters, it has also incited criticism, particularly from Algeria and the Polisario Front. These stakeholders argue that such moves undermine the region's stability and perpetuate the existing tensions in the area. The United Nations continues to advocate for a referendum to establish the final status of Western Sahara, a path fraught with delays due to entrenched disagreements over core issues such as voter eligibility.

As international interest in renewable energy projects in Morocco intensifies, the implications of the UK's endorsement will unfold in the coming years. If successful, these initiatives could secure jobs and enhance local economies, while simultaneously reinforcing Morocco's strategic relevance in global affairs—particularly in the realm of climate-oriented investments.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://carbon-pulse.com/404238/), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/34da997f-c4aa-4b4f-a266-65e9c35a2fe6)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/34da997f-c4aa-4b4f-a266-65e9c35a2fe6), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/c9d32485e082c1a406207021eb26409f), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uk-backs-moroccos-autonomy-plan-western-sahara-lammy-says-2025-06-01/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uk-backs-moroccos-autonomy-plan-western-sahara-lammy-says-2025-06-01/), [[5]](https://en.hespress.com/89378-uks-interest-in-moroccos-southern-regions-could-lead-to-sahara-recognition.html), [[7]](https://northafricapost.com/69683-green-hydrogen-uk-oblin-planning-major-zero-carbon-project-in-moroccan-sahara.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/c9d32485e082c1a406207021eb26409f), [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xlinks_Morocco%E2%80%93UK_Power_Project)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://en.hespress.com/89378-uks-interest-in-moroccos-southern-regions-could-lead-to-sahara-recognition.html), [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xlinks_Morocco%E2%80%93UK_Power_Project)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://carbon-pulse.com/404238/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/34da997f-c4aa-4b4f-a266-65e9c35a2fe6> - The UK government has shifted its stance on the Western Sahara dispute by endorsing Morocco's autonomy plan, which proposes keeping the territory under Moroccan control. Foreign Secretary David Lammy described the plan as the most credible path to a lasting resolution and emphasized support for a UN-led process respecting self-determination. This marks a departure from the UK's previous neutral position that viewed Western Sahara's status as undetermined. The move aligns the UK with countries like the US, France, and Spain that have recently backed Morocco’s stance but may strain relations with Algeria, which supports the Polisario Front—a group advocating for Western Sahara’s independence. The decision comes amid growing economic ties between the UK and Morocco, bolstered by future opportunities linked to Morocco’s role as a 2030 World Cup co-host. British firms are expected to benefit from preferential access to infrastructure, healthcare, and renewable energy projects. The UK cited its “progressive realism” foreign policy doctrine as the basis for the shift. Meanwhile, the decades-long conflict remains unresolved, with the UN's proposed referendum repeatedly delayed due to disagreements over voter eligibility, and intermittent hostilities have resumed since 2020.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/c9d32485e082c1a406207021eb26409f> - On June 1, 2025, the United Kingdom officially backed Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara, describing it as the most 'credible, viable and pragmatic' solution to the long-standing territorial conflict. British Foreign Minister David Lammy announced the shift alongside Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita in Rabat, citing the importance of resolving the dispute to enhance North African stability. Western Sahara, a resource-rich coastal desert, has been contested for nearly 50 years between Morocco and the pro-independence Polisario Front, which is based in Algerian refugee camps. The UK joins France and the U.S. as the third permanent United Nations Security Council member to support Morocco's proposal, which involves limited regional autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. Despite this support, the United Nations continues to advocate for a referendum to determine the territory's final status. Meanwhile, Morocco has attracted foreign investment to the area, particularly in fishing, agriculture, and renewable energy sectors, including the UK-linked XLinks project. The UK's endorsement of Morocco's stance has sparked criticism from Algeria, a regional rival, while the Polisario Front has yet to respond.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uk-backs-moroccos-autonomy-plan-western-sahara-lammy-says-2025-06-01/> - The United Kingdom has officially endorsed Morocco's 2007 autonomy plan as the most viable solution to the Western Sahara conflict, according to Foreign Minister David Lammy during a visit to Rabat. This longstanding dispute involves Morocco, which claims sovereignty over Western Sahara, and the Algeria-supported Polisario Front, which advocates for the territory's independence. Lammy emphasized that the UK would support the plan through bilateral, economic, regional, and international efforts. With this endorsement, the UK joins the United States and France as the third permanent member of the UN Security Council backing Morocco's proposal. Morocco's Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita welcomed the UK's support, describing it as part of growing momentum to resolve the conflict. Additionally, the UK and Morocco signed cooperation agreements in sectors such as healthcare, innovation, ports, water infrastructure, and procurement. These partnerships align with Morocco’s drive to boost infrastructure development in preparation for co-hosting the 2030 World Cup with Spain and Portugal. UK investments in Western Sahara are currently under consideration as part of the collaboration.
5. <https://en.hespress.com/89378-uks-interest-in-moroccos-southern-regions-could-lead-to-sahara-recognition.html> - Ongoing talks between Morocco’s Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita and the UK’s new Foreign Secretary David Lammy have heightened speculation that the UK might follow France’s lead and officially recognize Moroccan sovereignty over the Sahara. This follows the UK’s interest in investing in a hydrogen production project in Dakhla. A recent letter from a dozen British parliamentarians and Lords to Lammy urged support for Morocco’s autonomy plan for the Sahara. The UK’s potential recognition of Moroccan sovereignty could facilitate investment discussions in the region and accelerate strategic projects, such as the green industrial zone in Dakhla. These initiatives are aimed at creating jobs, modernizing infrastructure, and establishing the area as a hub for renewable energy and green technologies. Key projects include a hydrogen production facility in Dakhla and the development of a green industrial zone for manufacturing photovoltaic solar panels and wind turbine blades. Notably, the White Dunes project, a $2 billion initiative led by Falcon Capital Dakhla and HDF Energy, aims to produce green hydrogen with a combined capacity of 25 GW in wind, solar, and electrolyzers, targeting production to begin by 2030. Recognition by the UK would align it with Western countries like the United States and France, which have already expressed support for Morocco’s autonomy plan. This move could further legitimize Morocco’s claim to the Sahara on the international stage and potentially encourage other nations to follow suit, enhancing Morocco’s diplomatic leverage. Additionally, such recognition could strengthen Morocco’s alignment with Western policies, integrating it further into Western economic and political systems and amplifying its voice in global affairs.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xlinks_Morocco%E2%80%93UK_Power_Project> - The Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project is a proposal to create 11.5 GW of renewable generation, 22.5 GWh of battery storage and a 3.6 GW high-voltage direct current interconnector to carry solar and wind-generated electricity from Morocco to the United Kingdom. Morocco has been hailed as a potential key power generator for Europe as the continent looks to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. If built, the 4000km cable will be the world's longest undersea power cable, and would supply up to 8% of the UK's electricity consumption. The project is projected to be operational within a decade.
7. <https://northafricapost.com/69683-green-hydrogen-uk-oblin-planning-major-zero-carbon-project-in-moroccan-sahara.html> - UK Oblin group, which builds and operates hybrid utility scale solar, wind, hydro, biomass, waste to energy power stations, will carry out a major green hydrogen project in the Moroccan Saharan Dakhla-Oued Eddahab region. This zero-carbon project was disclosed following a visit paid lately by a delegation of investors, led by Oblin’s CEO, Brannan Tempest, to the city of Dakhla, pearl of Moroccan Sahara. “We are planning a major renewable energy project to produce green hydrogen and ammonia in Morocco’s southern provinces,” he said, citing the favorable climate of Dakhla, a coastal city with abundant sunshine and wind, offering investors huge business opportunities. “We are ready to launch our project expected to create 5,000 jobs,” underlined Mr.Tempest, noting that a new green industrial zone will be set up for manufacturers of solar photovoltaic panels and wind turbine blades. Chairman of the Dakhla-Oued Eddahab Regional Council, El Khattat Yanja, who met the British investors, has confirmed the UK investment projects, saying they will contribute to the local socioeconomic development and help create more job opportunities for young people. Members of the UK delegation who conferred with local authorities visited the Regional Investment Center (RIC), a fish factory, a center for women handicrafts, a cooperative specialized in camel cheese as well as the project of Atlantic port of Dakhla.