

# Is the UK's energy policy fit for purpose?

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'Business as usual' is not an option for the UK's nuclear energy sector; our energy companies' 'regressive and unjust funding approach' is causing fuel poverty, and the Northern Powerhouse could play a key role in shaping the UK's climate change future. Credit: The University of Manchester

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These are just some of the opinions in a new publication, 'On Energy:

How can evidence inform future [energy](#) policy?', by The University of Manchester. It is being launched on Wednesday 8th November at the House of Commons.

The report brings together some of the country's leading energy, policy, and [climate change](#) scientists, academics and experts to offer their opinions and solutions for the UK's most pressing energy issues.

The publication draws on expertise from across The University of Manchester and external collaborators, including Lord Jim O'Neill, Director of the Dalton Nuclear Institute, Professor Francis Livens, leading climate change researcher, Professor Alice Larkin and SUPERGEN Bioenergy Hub Director, Professor Patricia Thornley.

On the UK's nuclear policy, Professor Livens and his co-authors from DNI, Professors Tim Abram, Juan Matthews and Richard Taylor, say the industry needs to recognise that its competitors in the renewable sector, such as wind, solar and wave, are substantially cheaper. To combat this he says more innovation is needed to reduce the cost if it is to be taken seriously as an alternative to fossil fuels.



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They say: 'We can argue forever about the importance of baseload reliability, which nuclear gives you and renewables don't, but does that reliability really justify nuclear being 50% more costly? Nuclear has to look at its costs.'

Estimates for decommissioning the 'nuclear legacy', an issue 'dominated by Sellafield', range from £120 billion to £220 billion.

They added: 'Sellafield, like life, is complicated. Its fate is determined by real people and it is governed by the laws of unintended consequence. So how do we harness the power of innovation in this environment?'

'We must do everything differently, our technology, our governance, our

regulation, our public engagement and anything else that define the decommissioning challenge as a project in our society.'

The report also tackles the issue of [fuel poverty](#) and energy justice in a low carbon society. Dr Harriet Thomson, Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Environment, Education and Development, says: 'The human and societal costs of fuel poverty are extensive, resulting in worsened physical and mental health, increased usage of health services, and social isolation. Reducing carbon emissions and alleviating fuel poverty are both vitally important policy goals, but they have the potential to be in conflict.'

On the potential for the Northern Powerhouse to drive economic growth through a focus on its prime capabilities, Lord Jim O'Neill added: 'The North's civic and business leaders have identified four areas where the North of England has genuine world class economic competitive potential, and one of these is alternative energies.'

There are many key areas in the setcor which require a greater scrutiny to create sensible policies and drive effective solutions to address the energy and environment challenges. This report highlights some of the key pressing topics.

Provided by University of Manchester

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