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theguardian

## UK wind power overtakes coal for first time

Green groups hail analysis showing collapse in coal due to power station closures and rising carbon taxes

The UK's windfarms generated more electricity than coal power plants for the first time in 2016. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

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Windfarms across the UK generated more electricity in 2016 than coal power plants for the first time, according to an analyst's estimates.

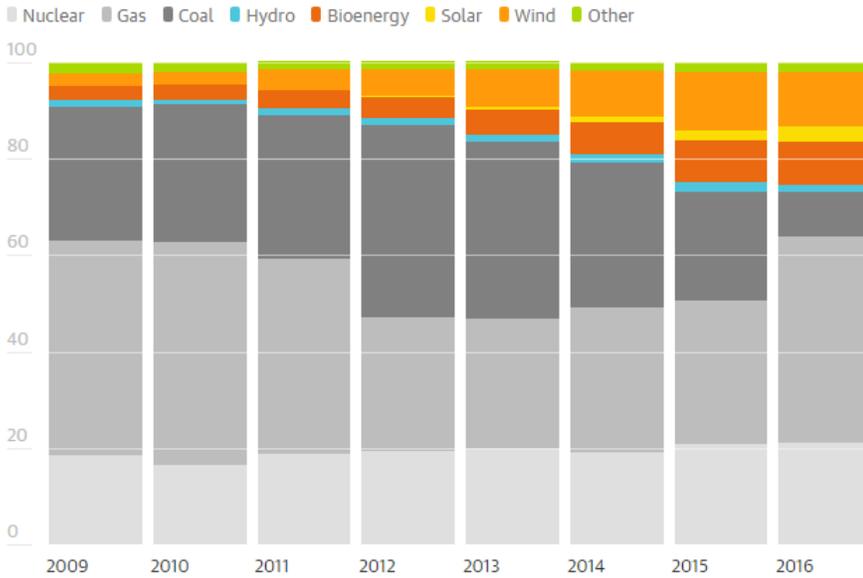


 The UK's windfarms generated more electricity than coal power plants for the first time in 2016. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

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**Wind turbines generated more electricity than coal power in 2016**

Percentage of electricity generation



Guardian graphic | Source: Carbon Brief

Three major coal power stations closed last year, causing coal electricity generation to plummet to 9.2%, down from 22.6% in 2015. Wind power provided 11.5% of generation in 2016, slightly down from 12% in 2015.

Coal’s collapse was described as a “milestone” by climate analysts Carbon Brief, and saw coal-fuelled electricity output at its lowest in 80 years. Green groups described it as “fantastic news”.

“The past 12 months have seen a year of firsts for the UK’s electricity system. At the broadest level, the UK grid is changing as centralised power stations are joined by thousands of smaller sites, particularly renewables, as part of efforts to decarbonise electricity supplies,” wrote Simon Evans, policy editor at Carbon Brief.

Ministers have pledged to phase out coal power by 2025 to meet carbon targets, but expect the final plant to close within five years as environmental policies make coal increasingly uneconomic.

The huge decline in coal power last year saw a series of records, including days with no coal power at all, and solar power generating more than coal across six months. The slack was largely taken up by gas-fired power stations, which was up 45% year on year, Carbon Brief found. Its analysis was based on grid data and estimates; official figures are due in March.

But 2016 also saw considerable growth in renewable power, and Christmas Day saw a record amount of electricity supplied by windfarms and biomass power plants.



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On Friday, Scottish company Dounreay Tri announced it had awarded the construction contract to Global Energy Group for an innovative pair of floating wind turbines off the coast of Dounreay, in Scotland. The technology is seen as a key way of putting turbines out in deeper waters.

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