

# Nuclear power 'cannot tackle climate change'

- Energy efficiency far more important, expert says
- Standard of debate in UK condemned as abysmal

- [David Adam](#), environment correspondent
- [The Guardian](#),
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New nuclear power stations would do little to combat climate change, according to a leading expert who has hit out at what he calls the "abysmal" standard of debate on the issue in the UK.

Kevin Anderson, a senior research fellow at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, said claims that nuclear power was the only way for Britain to meet demanding greenhouse gas targets were fundamentally wrong. He said: "That argument is way too simplistic. We can easily deal with climate change without nuclear power."

High profile figures including the environmentalist James Lovelock and Sir David King, the government's chief scientific adviser, have said that a new generation of nuclear power stations is the only realistic way for Britain to meet energy demand

while cutting carbon dioxide pollution, which contributes to climate change. Existing nuclear power stations generate about 20% of UK electricity and all but one are scheduled to close by 2023.

Dr Anderson said the separate demands of the transport and heating sectors meant that nuclear power supplied only about 3.6% of total UK energy used. Replacing nuclear reactors with gas and coal power stations by 2020 would raise carbon emissions by 4%-8%, he said. "We could very easily compensate for that with moderate increases in energy efficiency. If you've got money to spend on tackling climate change then you don't spend it on supply. You spend it on reducing demand."

The Department of Trade and Industry will launch a review of energy policies on Monday. It is expected to recommend building new nuclear reactors when it reports in the summer, partly because of climate change fears. Reactors do not produce carbon dioxide, though mining their fuel and dismantling them does. Ministers have pledged to cut carbon dioxide pollution by 60% by 2050; new reactors would not be built in time to contribute to a separate 20% reduction target by 2010.

Dr Anderson said wider use of energy efficiency measures such as house insulation and fuel-efficient cars could almost halve energy demand. His remarks come as the Tyndall Centre today releases the results of a survey of public attitudes to climate change and nuclear power, which show that 42% of people oppose building nuclear reactors and 34% support it. The results broadly mirror previous surveys: a Guardian/ICM poll last month showed 48% against new building and 45% for.

The Tyndall Centre survey of 1,491 people, carried out with Mori, found 60% of people supporting new building as long as renewable energy sources were developed and used at the same time, and 63% agreed that Britain needed nuclear power as part of a mix of sources to ensure a reliable supply. However, 74% said that nuclear power should not be considered as a solution for climate change before all other energy options had been explored.