

Britain Should Stop Building Wind Farms

Britain should stop building wind farms because the country has too much electricity, the UK boss of EDF Energy has said.

Simone Rossi, the energy giant's chief executive, said Ed Miliband's expansion of wind and solar power was creating far more electricity generation capacity than needed.

Mr Rossi told The Telegraph: "We should stop building wind farms and focus instead on raising demand for electricity ... As a country we don't need more electricity generation capacity. We need to use the generation capacity we have already got.

"As a country, we've always got it wrong. We've always thought electricity demand was going to increase, but it decreased ... So now we have this large [generating] infrastructure, twice as much as we need, which means we also need to build twice the [transmission] grid."

He added: "These are all fixed costs – so the key question is how are we going to absorb those fixed costs? My conclusion is that the time has come to shift the debate from building more [infrastructure] and just stop it for the foreseeable future. That's enough. The issue now is how we use it."

Mr Rossi's call for a pause on wind farms comes as Mr Miliband, the Energy Secretary, drives a substantial expansion of renewable energy. Earlier this year, he signed off on plans to build the biggest onshore wind farm in the UK in a decade.

Many turbines are built in remote locations that require new cabling to be installed to carry their power. The build out of the grid has failed to keep pace, meaning electricity generation at times threatens to overwhelm it.

As a result, taxpayers are increasingly having to pay to switch off turbines at times when the grid cannot handle their power.

Almost £800m has been spent on so-called “curtailment” payments so far this year, putting 2026 on course to eclipse the £1.4bn spent on switching off turbines last year.

Mr Rossi said demand for electricity in the UK had fallen by a fifth in the last two decades “even though time and again forecasts have said that it would grow”.

“Why have we got it so wrong? The main reason is deindustrialisation – the move to a service-based economy and sluggish economic growth,” he said.

“If we carry on with the Clean Power Plan, we’ll have much more generating capacity than we’ve ever had in the past – but it is oversized compared with demand.”

The EDF boss said Mr Miliband should instead focus on boosting demand for green electricity rather than building more wind and solar farms.



Ed Miliband signed off on plans earlier this year to build the biggest onshore wind farm in the UK in a decade Credit: Zara Farrar /No 10 Downing Street

He called for the Government to accelerate the rollout of electric vehicles, heat pumps and approvals for new data centres to mop up the UK's surplus electricity supplies.

Adam Berman, the policy director at trade body Energy UK, agreed with Mr Rossi's analysis.

He said: "Falling demand is a problem, and it has become abundantly clear that the UK requires a step change in its approach to incentivising demand."

EDF UK, a wholly owned subsidiary of the French state-owned Électricité de France, has become a critical pillar of the UK power system.

Besides developing the UK's next new nuclear power stations, at Hinkley in Somerset and Sizewell in Suffolk, it also operates 37 onshore wind farms and is developing three more offshore wind farms.

An EDF spokesman clarified that Mr Rossi was not calling for the scrapping of wind and solar plants already approved or under construction, but a pause on the approval of new projects.

Speaking at the Future of Utilities summit in London, Mr Rossi said Britain's renewables build out had cut carbon emissions, created jobs and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

However, the slump in power demand combined with the system of financing renewables via levies on consumer bills was creating significant new costs, he warned.

Analysis by the Office for Budget Responsibility shows such levies added £11bn to bills last year and suggests this will approach £19bn by 2030.

A spokesman for Mr Miliband's energy department said: "We are driving further and faster for clean homegrown power that we control, to bring down bills for good for households and businesses."