

Boris bullshits the greens (again); and they swallow it (again!)

Just because something sounds nice and positive doesn't mean it actually is; and with this government, that's seemingly guaranteed – especially where it concerns the environment.

Paul Mobbs, *The 'Meta-Blog'*, issue no.8, 6th October 2020



Why do highly-paid green campaigners, working for the groups who claim to represent the 'public interest', keep pliantly falling for the bullshit rather than calling it out?

I really don't have [time for this](#) today, but as all you 'green consumers' are [so detached from](#) statistical reality I'll have to make time to demonstrate the audacity of the con being perpetrated here: You are willingly being deceived over something which sounds nice, but in physical terms represents nothing. What's worse, the 'professional' environmentalists representing you seem to have fallen for it too.

Perhaps I'm being overly harsh to all you 'green consumers'. OK, that's fair. You are not 'eco-professionals', and certainly don't have the time in today's [rushed world](#) to keep track of all the minutiae involved in issues such as this. And even if you tried, the media's uncritical coverage – as evinced by this announcement today – means it would be hard for you to know where to start.

The problem here is that mainstream green campaigners are welcoming this announcement – despite being paid an ample amount of money to (a) understand the data behind this statement, and (b) give a statistically rigorous critique of it. The fact that they are failing in their duty to represent you should give you all concern – certainly more concern than the fact the government is bullshitting the public over green issues, *again*.

Given they have failed so badly, I'll just have to (once again!) do the professional eco-campaigner's job for them (which is presumably why, in addition to my preference for "*speaking truth into indifference*", they won't employ me!):

The handbook of 'official' energy data in Britain is the [Digest of UK Energy Statistics](#). The latest version was [published in 2020](#), giving data for 2019.

One of the standard 'distractions' political wonks use to fool the public is to talk about 'energy' when

in fact they mean 'power'. In this case though Boris is talking specifically about 'power'; which means this policy applies to electricity consumption only, not all domestic energy consumption.

'Power consumption' in Britain was 295 tera-Watt-hours (TW-h) in 2019. Of that total power consumption figure, 'domestic' premises ([DUKES 1.1-1.3](#)) consumed 104TW-h – just 35% of the total.

I am using 'TW-h' here in order to make it easier to compare with power generation statistics. One TW-h is equivalent to one billion kilo-Watt-hours (kW-h) – the unit of electricity consumption we are usually billed for at home.

What is equally significant is that in terms of all 'domestic' energy consumption (481TW-h) electricity is only 22% of the energy consumed by domestic buildings ([DUKES 1.1-1.3](#)).

Why talk about 'power' then? It's because although electricity is not that significant in terms of energy supply, it is far more psychologically significant in terms of how people perceive energy in their lives. E.g., while people value their TV or computer, they don't necessarily grasp the difference between their computer consuming 0.3kW when their gas boiler is consuming 30kW. *Which is precisely why Boris is using this as a policy distraction!*

All-in-all, domestic electricity consumption is just 4.5% of national [primary energy demand](#). That's because the 'final energy consumption' figure – routinely used for government projections – excludes the energy used by iron & steel and other large primary manufacturing industries (142TW-h). More significantly, it excludes the 18% of primary energy 'lost' during the generation of electricity in power stations or the production of fuels in oil refineries (383TW-h) or lost in the system after that (32TW-h).

Yes, that's right – domestic power consumption in Britain is equivalent to just one-quarter of the energy 'lost' from our power stations and refineries!

Wouldn't it be better for the country to address the losses from our inefficient system first? Perhaps with a bit of [demand-side management](#)?; or targeting the [best marginal cost](#) savings in the economy? (see diagram, right – source, [McKinsey](#)); or mandating that only [combined heat and power](#) (CHP) be used to supply future demand, instead of consenting [new 1.240MW gas-fired plants](#) which will dump half of their energy consumption into the environment as heat?

No, Boris can't do that; *that would be radical.*

Theoretically then Boris has committed to supplying 104TW-h of off-shore wind power by 2030. What does this mean in policy & development terms?

In 2019 off-shore wind provided 32.146TW-h of power ([DUKES 6.4](#)), from an installed capacity of 9,971 mega-Watts (MW). The off-shore wind 'load factor' in 2019 – the amount of time that the turbines actually generate – was measured at 39.6% ([DUKES 6.5](#)). Taking the load factor and installed capacity that creates a figure for generation of 34.589TW-h. The 32.146TW-h figure stated in DUKES is about 7% lower than the calculated figure, but that's probably about right given the power consumed by the generating plant and the inherent transmission losses off-shore.

As a rough calculation then, 104TW-h of off-shore wind power, adding-back the losses and using the above load factor, would require a total of 32,259MW off-shore wind capacity – which is an increase of 22,288MW over the 2019 total.

Sounds a lot? *Over 22 gigawatts of new wind farms?* But as is so predictable with the current government, how much of that

Exhibit 1

Global GHG abatement cost curve beyond business-as-usual – 2030

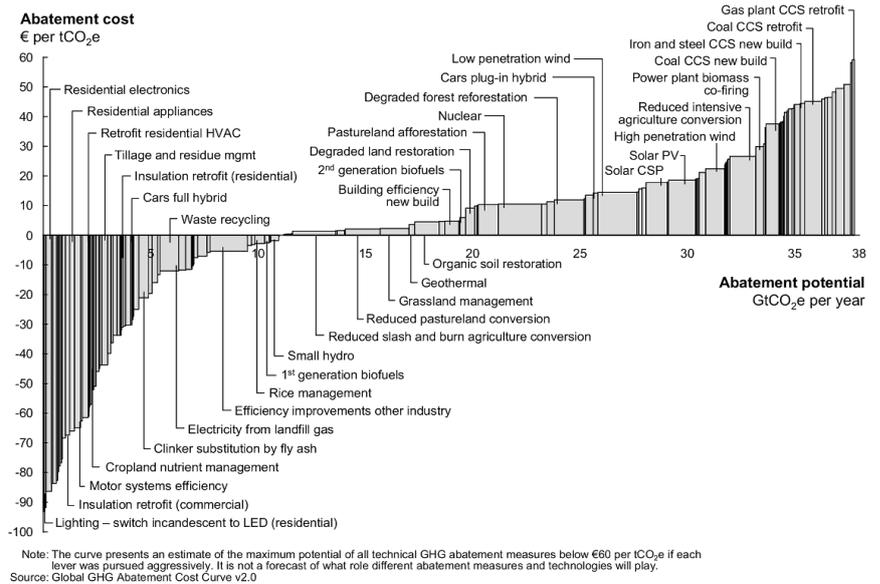


figure is actually 'new'?

The table on the right shows the off-shore wind farms currently under construction or planned/consented [in the UK](#):

- 3,191MW is [under construction](#);
- 17,041MW are currently [planned or consented](#);
- Which means the additional capacity proposed by Boris, 91% is already 'in the pipeline', to be constructed well before the target date of 2030.

What Boris is actually proposing then is roughly 2,000MW of additional generating capacity – which these days is equivalent to about one large off-shore wind farm.

In summary then, let's re-write that government statement:
“Boris commits to building roughly one large new off-shore wind farm, beyond those already planned or under construction, to generate enough power for all the homes in Britain – although that still represents barely a quarter of the energy routinely lost from Britain’s energy supply system.”

Be truthful now... *does that story really sound as compelling? Of course it doesn't.*

Planned/Under Construction Off-shore Wind Projects in the UK	
	<i>Capacity, MW</i>
Under construction:	
Hornsea Project 2	1,386
Moray East	950
Triton Knoll	855
Total:	3,191
Proposed:	
Hornsea Project Three	2,400
Moray Firth	1,866
Creyke Beck A	1,200
Creyke Beck B	1,200
East Anglia	3,100
Teesside A	1,200
Sofia Offshore	1,400
Seagreen	1,075
Norfolk Vanguard	1,800
Norfolk Boreas	1,800
Total:	17,041
Construction + proposed:	20,232

What you have to ask yourself though is why the eco-campaigners of the Green Alliance or Greenpeace (mentioned in The Guardian's article) are trumpeting this announcement, when in fact it represents a 'nothing much' improvement upon a larger problem; and one which has far more options to solve it than just more wind power (as shown in the diagram on the previous page).

In fact the only person to acquit themselves was Green MP [Caroline Lucas](#), who said "*the Prime Minister's announcement falls woefully short*", but then went on to demand the '[Green New Deal](#)' concept which so many have criticised as [physically in-viable](#) to deliver, with [few of the benefits](#) stated.

I think my favourite response of those I've seen today was [Doug Parr](#), "*Greenpeace UK Chief Scientist and policy guru*", [who said](#), "*If delivered off-shore wind would be delivering over half current UK electricity demand*".

On paper, adding-in what the [government considers](#) 'green power' on-shore, that might be a

roughly accurate figure; but the fact is that [an awful lot](#) of that 'green power' on-shore is coming from [waste incineration](#) and [pelletised biomass](#), neither of which has arguably any ecological benefit.

That's our greatest problem here. Green campaigners want this to be true because it confirms the objectives of their job description; but thinking that, and saying that, doesn't make it so when we look at the available statistics.

Let's be clear here: As [outlined recently](#) in relation to the film '*Planet of the Humans*', the mainstream green movement does not [objectively represent](#) the public interest. It represents a largely industry-backed vision for technological change. And as a result of that placidity, those in charge of that process can now expect, should they behave all the way up the greasy pole of the 'third sector', to leap – for example – from being a [wildlife campaigner](#) at Friends of the Earth to running Britain's [increasingly compromised](#) countryside & wildlife regulator, *Natural England*.

Our problem isn't just Boris and his 'alien' spin-doctor Dominic Cummings. The problem is that the people who the public believe are representing their interests have become an obstacle to progress too. It's not enough to demand that those who govern us actually provide a rational, evidence-based argument for change. We also have to demand that those who 'claim' to represent us actually do so, with clear conviction to the reality of our present predicament, and with an level of technical analysis which clearly highlights when the government are spinning bullshit in lieu of a true plan for change.