

Britain runs coal power stations amid energy crisis

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Coal-fired power stations have been brought back into use as soaring gas prices threaten power supplies.

Britain, which faces soaring natural gas prices, has been forced to run coal-fired power stations in order to secure energy supplies, electricity generation company Drax said on Thursday.

The country is particularly exposed to Europe's ongoing energy crisis due to its reliance on [natural gas](#) to generate electricity. The price of

European gas futures has more than doubled since May.

"These facilities have fulfilled a critical role in keeping the lights on at a time when the energy system is under considerable pressure," the group said in a statement emailed to AFP.

Drax—which owns the nation's biggest facility in Yorkshire, northern England—had planned to switch from coal to biomass this year to help tackle climate change.

The group could now extend the use of coal, Chief Executive Will Gardiner told the Financial Times.

"We're very aware that the country might have a significant problem and if there's something Drax can do we will absolutely think about doing that," Gardiner told the business-focused newspaper.

Any delay could complicate Britain's plans to scrap coal-powered electricity generation by October 2024.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government, which seeks to reduce Britain's [carbon emissions](#) to net zero by 2050, will in November host the COP26 United Nations climate summit in Glasgow.

Prices of wholesale natural gas in Britain hit record highs last week, after a fire knocked out a vital point connecting the country's [power grid](#) to France.

Runaway prices also sparked fears of rocketing domestic energy bills as demand peaks during the cold northern hemisphere winter.

Britain will face a "tough winter" if temperatures are colder than normal, Gardiner also told the FT.

About 1.5 million consumers in Britain have seen their domestic energy suppliers go bust in recent weeks as a result of chronic turmoil in the market.

Europe's energy crisis has also been exacerbated by a lack of wind for turbine sites, coupled with ongoing nuclear outages—and the winding down of coal mines by climate-conscious governments.

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