

# Britain vows to build new gas power stations

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Britain's Conservative government believes that additional gas power plants to avert a threat of energy blackouts.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government pledged Tuesday to build new gas-fired power stations to boost energy security, drawing criticism over his climate policies before this year's general election.

The Conservative government, which aims to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, announced in a statement that it would seek to construct the gas power plants to avert a threat of energy blackouts.

The UK has spearheaded low-carbon energies such as nuclear, solar and wind power in a strategy to combat sky-high domestic electricity and gas bills, which rocketed after key producer Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022, cutting off gas supplies and sparking a cost-of-living crisis.

"The government has committed to support the building of new gas power stations to maintain a safe and reliable energy source for days when the weather forecast doesn't power up renewables," it said in Tuesday's statement.

Sunak, whose Conservatives trail the main opposition Labour party in opinion polls, added that Britain needed to reach its net zero goal "in a sustainable way that doesn't leave people without energy on a cloudy, windless day".

Outlining the pledge in central London, energy minister Claire Coutinho also warned that "without gas backing up renewables, we face the genuine prospect of blackouts".

The independent Climate Change Committee (CCC), a UK body which advises the state, conceded last year that a "small amount" of gas-fired power in 2035 was "compatible with a decarbonized power system" in order to provide balance and ensure security of energy supplies.

Sunak had last year softened his net zero goals, specifically by delaying a ban on the sale of petrol and diesel cars by five years to 2035.

The UK has also issued a swathe of new oil and gas exploration licenses to lift energy supplies amid Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in

Ukraine.

"This is the latest step in efforts to reach net zero in a sustainable, pragmatic way that rids the UK of the need to rely on foreign dictators like Putin," the government added.

## 'Failure'

Tuesday's news however drew the ire of Labour energy spokesman Ed Miliband, who urged Sunak to lift a de-facto UK ban on new onshore wind turbines.

"We need to replace retiring gas-fired stations as part of a decarbonised power system, which will include carbon capture and hydrogen playing a limited back-up role in the system," he said.

"But the reason the Tories cannot deliver the lower bills and energy security we need is that they are specialists in failure when it comes to our clean energy future: persisting with the ludicrous ban on onshore wind, bungling the offshore wind auctions, and failing on energy efficiency."

The gas announcement also sparked anger from environmentalists who argue they are counter to the nation's overall aim to help tackle climate change.

"The government's cunning plan to boost energy security and meet our climate goals is to make Britain more dependent on the very fossil fuel that sent our bills rocketing and the planet's temperature soaring," said Greenpeace UK policy director Doug Parr.

"The only route to a low-cost, secure and clean energy system is through attracting massive private investment to develop renewables and upgrade

our aging grid, but this government has failed on both fronts."

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