

UK reaches jolly good milestone in days without coal

9 May 2019, by Nancy Cohen



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The UK has gone more than five days without burning coal, the [longest](#) streak without burning the fuel since the Industrial Revolution, said Bloomberg. It breaks the previous record from earlier this year, a total of 90 hours.

Grid data on Bloomberg showed that no [coal](#) was used for [power generation](#) by UK stations since about 1 pm in London on May 1.

Megan Geuss, *Ars Technica*, said, "The UK is a leader in [offshore wind](#), and it also has [nuclear plants](#) and [natural gas](#)-fired plants to feed power demand." Geuss also pointed out that "Grids around the world tend to hit zero-carbon milestones in spring and autumn, when [winds](#) are high and daylight is still plentiful, and customers aren't demanding a lot of electricity to light and heat (or cool) their homes."

Fintan Slye, Director of UK System Operator at [National Grid](#), reminded the world of a no-coal goal. "As more and more renewables come onto our energy system, coal-free runs like this are going to be a regular occurrence. We believe that

by 2025 we will be able to fully operate Great Britain's electricity system with zero carbon."

The Guardian said, "Burning coal to generate electricity is thought to be incompatible with avoiding catastrophic climate [change](#)."

With a relatively small manufacturing sector, however, UK's contribution toward [greenhouse gas emissions](#) is higher, not lower, when you count "consumption emissions." Jon Porter said that in *The Verge*. He explained that these included "the [emissions](#) created in the manufacturing and transportation of the UK's imports."

The no-coal period was said by *The Guardian* to be a milestone "for the first time since Queen Victoria was on the throne."

Brian Kahn in *Earther* had a reminder that natural gas may burn cleaner than coal, but is "still hardly a climate [solution](#) since it releases carbon dioxide and methane in the extraction and burning processes."

Geuss similarly pointed out that natural gas, though still a fossil fuel, released less [carbon dioxide](#) into the atmosphere when burned, compared to coal.

Coal's standing beyond the UK? The transition to renewables stalled globally last year, said Kahn, while "the [developing world](#)—particularly China—continues to add coal to the grid."

Will Wade, Bloomberg, wrote an article appearing on Wednesday in *The Washington Post*. The world is still addicted to coal, he stated. It's one of the biggest sources of carbon emissions and a key [driver](#) of climate change. But it's also abundant, easy to transport and convenient to store.

Just as Kahn reported how China continued adding coal to the grid, Wade reported that "China, the world's largest consumer of coal, tripled its use

from 2010 through 2017."

Among the world's energy sources, said Wade, coal ranked second to oil. "There's enough to last for 150 years at current production [levels](#). China, India and Japan are the largest importers; Indonesia, Australia and Russia are the biggest exporters."

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APA citation: UK reaches jolly good milestone in days without coal (2019, May 9) retrieved 20 May 2019 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2019-05-uk-jolly-good-milestone-days.html>

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