Green Party POLICY

Record of Policy Statements

ENERGY

Contents

REN90.1: Phasing Out Nuclear Power

(Originally passed - April 1990 Conference)

The Green Party will phase out nuclear power within the first full parliamentary term of a government.

Background

During the final quarter of 1988 nuclear power supplied about 20% of Britain's electricity demand, which is approximately 3% of our total energy consumption. About 55 Gigawatts of generating capacity were installed on the grid at the end of 1988, of which about 10GW were nuclear. Roughly 3 GW of this consists of ageing Magnox reactors which are reaching the end of their intended lives, the remainder consists of newer Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR) stations. One 1.2GW Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) is under construction at Sizewell.

The highest demand for electricity was 48.3GW during the severe cold weather of January 1987. Because some power stations, including some nuclear ones, were not working at the time, all the power stations which were in working order were at their full capacity to meet this demand. There is therefore a risk of power cuts during the winter peak if all nuclear power stations are closed immediately.

Aims

To phase out nuclear power within the first full Parliamentary term of a Green government.

To protect vulnerable groups who at present depend on electricity for heating from the risk of power cuts in cold weather.

To provide alternative employment to those who currently depend on nuclear power for a living.

To protect the environment from the danger posed by nuclear waste.

Policies

No further uranium would be imported into the UK. If necessary, while reactors continued to operate, they would be fuelled with mixed-oxide fuel using plutonium currently stored at Sellafield.

No licences would be granted for uranium mining in the UK.

Reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel would cease forthwith, thus minimising the volume of radioactive waste produced. Reprocessing plants would be dismantled sufficiently to render them inoperable, and dry stores for spent nuclear fuel would be constructed at nuclear power station sites.

The military reactors at Calder Hall and Chapel Cross, and the civil Magnox reactors, would be shut down forthwith and all their non- radioactive components dismantled.

Work on any new nuclear stations under construction at the time would be halted.

The AGR stations, and any PWRs in service, would be closed down as soon as the gap had been closed by reductions in electricity demand due to conservation, or by new generating units.

No new remotely located, gigawatt-sized fossil fuelled power stations would be built, as these take a minimum of seven years to build and cannot be used as Combined Heat and Power stations.

Closing the Gap

Measures taken to close the gap would be those which could be set in motion within one year and have a large impact within four years. These would include:

- The Green Party's major energy conservation programme would rapidly have an impact on electricity consumption. A Resources Tax on fuel would directly provide an incentive to reduce consumption, and provide funds to invest in conservation. Grants for insulating homes and carrying out energy surveys in industrial and commercial premises would be reinstated and extended. It is difficult to assess the immediate impact of these measures, but it is generally possible to save 20-30% of the electricity consumption using only simple conservation measures which pay for themselves within 2 years. Replacing all domestic light bulbs with low-energy bulbs would save 5 GW at peak time.
- A large-scale push to develop 'in-house' combined heat and power, where a building obtains its heat and electricity from an engine driving a generator. This could be installed rapidly in many buildings which already have standby generators installed. The generators in NHS hospitals alone add up to the power of Sizewell B, and in total 2 to 3 GW could be developed rapidly from this source.
- Proven renewable sources of electricity would be introduced rapidly, particularly wind energy and landfill gas. Wind turbines have a lead-time of a few months, and conservative estimates suggest that 1GW could be installed before meeting serious environmental objections. Although wind energy is an intermittent source, wind turbines have been shown to provide 'firm power' equivalent to about one third of their peak output, so each GW replaces the equivalent of one Magnox station.
- Large industrial consumers would be offered their electricity on an interruptible tariff, where they pay less on condition that they switch off at times of extremely high domestic demand.
- Grants would be available to householders to convert from electric heating to other more fuel-efficient forms.
- About 2GW is added to peak electricity demand when people switch on electric kettles and cookers at the end of a popular television programme. If there were to be a threat of power cuts because demand was already abnormally high during exceptionally severe winter weather, this could be averted by varying the times of transmission from the different regional transmitters or broadcasting a caption asking people to switch off unnecessary lights and appliances.
- Development based on using less energy and substituting renewable sources would create large numbers of jobs, easily absorbing most employees of the nuclear industry.
- The role of the UK Atomic Energy Authority would then be restricted to managing radioactive waste and decommissioning nuclear power stations. The relatively small number of employees whose skills and experience are only relevant to the nuclear industry would be needed for this purpose.
- All nuclear research, other than waste management and decommissioning, would be halted, and research funds would be channelled into harnessing the energy of our nearest safe nuclear reactor, the sun.

REN01.1: Against Energy from Waste Incineration Plants

(Originally passed - Autumn 2001 Conference)

Background

Incineration is contrary to the ideal of zero waste and is destructive to the green principles of reduce, re-use, repair and recycle. Incineration is on a par with landfill within the EU's Hierarchy of Waste Reduction. Incinerators create a demand for waste in competition with waste reduction and recycling and often tie the waste collecting authorities into supplying an agreed quantity of waste, for a certain number of years.

Policy Statement

1. The Green Party rejects the EU;s legal definition of Incineration termed ;Energy from Waste; (EfW) as ;renewable energy;. We also note that considering 'Energy from Waste' as renewable energy is a distraction from developing true forms of renewable energy.
2. Incinerator ash from EfW should not be considered as recycled material and included in waste recovery targets as the current Labour government is doing.
3. Energy from Waste is not 'Green Energy'. The Green Party reaffirms that

incineration is detrimental to reducing carbon emissions and should not be included in NFFO agreements.

4. The Green Party maintains that the precautionary principle should be used to safeguard the environment and public health and for this reason we believe that there should be no expansion to existing incinerators and no new incinerators.
5. The Green Party calls for no further expansion of incinerators and no new incinerators, and instead a commitment in actions and not just words to develop recycling.
6. The Green Party notes that investment in recycling provides five times as many jobs as are displaced from landfill and incineration. We therefore call for investment in recycling programmes and waste reduction initiatives.
7. The Green Party believes that legislation needs to be brought into place to put the responsibility of reducing waste on those who produce the waste.
8. This conference is opposed to the proposed HLC incinerator in Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea and calls upon Sue Essex, the Environment Minister for the Welsh Assembly, to call it in for public inquiry.

REN02.1: Nuclear Bankruptcy

(Originally passed - Autumn 2002 Conference)

Whereas it is now clear that British Energy, the operator of the nuclear industry in England and Wales, is formally bankrupt:

Whereas the British government has been forced to loan the company more than £400 million to prevent the serious danger associated with leaving the nuclear plant unattended;

Whereas nuclear electricity represents 25% of all electricity generated in the UK, and there is a clear overcapacity in electricity requirement in the UK of 30%;

Whereas nuclear waste is costly to dispose of and is radioactive for tens of thousands of years;

Whereas nuclear pollution produced by the licensed operation of nuclear power stations is associated with serious health effects;

Whereas nuclear sites provide terrorist targets;

Whereas, following accidents like those at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl it is clear that the operation of nuclear power stations themselves represent serious potential dangers;

Whereas calculations by the OKO Institute and others have shown that claims by the nuclear industry of being CO2 free exclude considerations of the whole nuclear cycle from mining to disposal and that inclusion of these shows that nuclear power does not give any CO2 advantage over efficient fossil fuel powered electricity generation;

Whereas the IPCC does not suggest nuclear new build as part of a global CO2 mitigation strategy;

The Green Party calls for the immediate closure of all nuclear power stations and immediate plans for safe decommissioning. As an uneconomic and dangerous sector the nuclear industry has no future as part of the UK's energy strategy.

REN02.2: Bankrupt Nuclear Industry

(Originally passed - Autumn 2002 Conference)

Energy Minister Brian Wilson's intimation that the continued existence of the now bankrupt nuclear industry may be justified as a means of containing carbon emissions under the Kyoto obligations is hardly surprising as he has a nuclear power station in his constituency. He therefore loses impartiality in the current energy white paper debate and should distance himself from the process.

Furthermore the Green Party asserts that as the nuclear fuel cycle is a net carbon emitter public money would be better spent on emerging renewable technologies rather than bailing out an antiquated industry on its knees.

The nuclear industry is not carbon neutral because the mining and manufacture of uranium generates substantial carbon emissions. As Green Party scientist Dr Busby has stated the nuclear industry has been responsible for over a million deaths worldwide. The Green Party further asserts that not only is nuclear power not economically viable but, furthermore, poses a great danger to public health.

REN02.3: Liabilities Management Agency

(Originally passed - Autumn 2002 Conference)

Conference condemns the setting up of the Liabilities Management Agency as an attempt to keep afloat a bankrupt nuclear industry

through back door financing of reprocessing and other activities.

Conference believes that both ecological and financial imperatives demand that THORP and MOX plant be closed down immediately.

Conference notes that future nuclear power stations could only be built using massive public subsidies and opposes Government plans to support nuclear power station construction.

Conference regards any attempt to subsidise their construction through public means as an outrage, especially if this occurs through back door methods or accountancy scams that have littered the history of nuclear power in the UK.

Conference denounces the Government's current Energy Review as a front to satisfy the nuclear power industry and resolves to conduct an alternative Energy Review. This would focus on the huge scope for more efficient energy use, as opposed to the Energy Supply orientation of the Government's review.

REN03.1: Bankruptcy of Government's renewable energy programme

(Originally passed - Autumn 2003 Conference)

Conference denounces the Government's failure to act quickly to prevent its scheme of financing renewable energy from going effectively bankrupt.

Conference notes that there is the equivalent of nearly Sizewell B's worth of wind power generating capacity that has achieved planning consent but which has not yet been installed. However wind power developers cannot obtain funding because the bankruptcy of TXU Energy has destroyed confidence in the Government's system of funding renewable energy through renewable obligation certificates (ROCs). TXU has failed to pay money into the renewable obligation fund leading, according to Ofgem, to £20 million shortfall in the renewables obligation fund.

Conference calls upon the Government to immediately fund this shortfall and underwrite ROCS to a minimum value of 3p/kWh for 15 years.

Conference calls upon the Green Party Executive to write to the Government demanding this action.

Conference denounces the hypocrisy of the Government in bankrolling the running costs of nuclear power run by British Energy, which has already been built with state funds. At the same time the Government has failed to allow wind power and other renewable energy schemes relatively small amounts of money to allow them to be even commissioned.

REN03.2: Councillors and Sustainable Energy Strategies

(Originally passed - Autumn 2003 Conference)

Conference supports Councillors who are campaigning for local authorities to use procurement and planning policies in favour of sustainable energy strategies such as solar power and motor vehicles powered by alternative fuels.

However, Conference notes that it is not possible to achieve radical cuts in carbon dioxide emissions without the adoption of sometimes less glamorous but highly effective energy efficiency tactics that can deliver great energy savings and emissions cuts to local authorities at low cost.

Conference believes that the Green Party should act to shape and to lead public perceptions of what is a sustainable energy strategy.

Conference calls upon Councillors to press for their. authorities to adopt measures such as:

1. Expansion of energy management personnel and training in energy efficiency of all those who take buildings and equipment procurement and refurbishment decisions
2. Installation of lighting, heating and refrigeration control systems and early replacement of inefficient lighting systems
3. Use of laptops and power down systems to cut IT energy consumption
4. Ensure that buildings are commissioned to best practice energy efficiency standards
5. Radical improvement in the energy efficiency of new motor vehicles which are procured by local authorities and police authorities
6. Use of planning policy to encourage best practice energy efficiency in social housing, buildings constructed on Council land and encouragement of housing developers to install community heating schemes that can be linked to combined heat and power
7. Agreeing contracts for long term supply of renewable energy from specific renewable energy schemes.

Local authorities are major purchasers and thus have the ability to underwrite insecure markets for green products and to help lower prices by gaining the benefits of economies of scale. Green councillors should use the Best Value framework to argue for the switching of energy procurement contracts towards renewable sources. This will have an immediate impact on the level of pollution from the use of energy and indirectly encourage the growth of the renewable energy sector.

REN07.1: Tidal Lagoon in Swansea Bay

(Originally passed - Spring 2007 Conference)

This Conference supports the proposal for a tidal lagoon for electricity-generation in Swansea Bay, and the scheme launched by local Green Party members and others to enable that lagoon, when built, to be owned and operated for the benefit of local people. The Green Party endorses this as a model for other tidal lagoon projects where appropriate elsewhere around the coasts of Britain, subject to favourable environmental impact studies in all cases.

REN09.1: Natural gas storage in underground salt caverns

(Originally passed - Spring 2009 Conference)

1. The Green Party reaffirms that the most desirable management of energy can only be achieved by maximising the use of renewable energy resources which would, in turn, reduce or eliminate the need to import natural gas.
2. The Green Party maintains that the precautionary principle should be used to safeguard public health and for this reason we call for a ban on natural gas storage in underground salt caverns within 5 miles of a populated area.

REN09.2: Ending Fuel Poverty

(Originally passed - Spring 2009 Conference)

The Green Party of England and Wales condemns the government decision to talk out the Fuel Poverty Bill at its second reading in parliament on Friday. This bill would have placed a legal requirement on the government to tackle fuel poverty. Conference notes that 5 million households in the UK are currently living are in fuel poverty, and that 25,000 older people die each year in the winter months as a result of this.

The Green Party believes this is a disgraceful state of affairs and that the behaviour of Labour MP for Lewisham Deptford and junior minister for climate change, Joan Ruddock in talking out this bill were reprehensible and not those of a government serious about tackling fuel poverty and climate change.