

Dear Sir,

I would like to reply to the letter from Colin McInnes (Letters, June 19th) which suggests that the views given by Nuclear Free Local Authorities Scotland last week (Letters, June 16th) do not stand up.

The Royal Academy of Engineering figures are remarkably similar to those put forward by the nuclear industry. The Downing Street Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) Report in 2002 expressed scepticism about the industry's optimistic cost projections, and Professor Gordon Mackerron, who was a member of the PIU Energy Review Team has more recently accused the Government of failing to acknowledge the uncertainty surrounding the cost projections used in the latest White Paper. Achieving the costs put forward by the nuclear industry will depend on absolutely everything going according to plan, unlike the current reactor construction projects in Finland and France.

Colin McInnes might want to look at Business Risks and Cost of New Nuclear Power by Craig Severance, which estimates that costs in the United States could reach 25 to 30 cents per kWh (15 – 18p). It is hardly surprising there is widespread scepticism about the cost of electricity from new reactors when the Finnish reactor is already three years late and 50% over budget.

<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/opinion/Power-points.5381631.jp>

COUNCILLOR Euan McLeod (Letters, 17 June) provides some unverifiable facts concerning nuclear power.

Mr McLeod could have consulted the Royal Academy of Engineering submission to the House of Commons Committee on Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills (March 2008), which notes that nuclear power costs are comparable with coal and approximately half the cost of wind turbines.

Mr McLeod could also have noted that the "climate policy adviser" to the Finnish government he quoted is Oras Tynkknen, an elected member for the Green League party whose list of interests on his website includes wind turbines and lentil soup and who is hardly an impartial judge of the benefits or otherwise of nuclear power.

Let us be clear. Since the industrial revolution the growth of low-cost energy production has been an overwhelmingly civilising influence while carbon emission per unit of energy production has been steadily falling with a transition through wood, coal, oil, gas and nuclear fission. Future energy production will need to meet the rising expectations of the developing world while reducing dependence on fossil fuels rather than satisfying personal ideologies.

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<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/opinion/Nuclear-gamble.5371688.jp>

Inefficient and expensive energy production will, indeed, be socially regressive, but the suggestion of Colin McInnes (Letters, 13 June) that new nuclear reactors will produce low-cost energy is extremely unlikely to come to fruition.

Recent cost estimates from the United States suggest that capital costs of new reactors are out of control. New reactors are not just extremely expensive, but spectacularly expensive, with costs on track to reach at least 9p to 12p per kWh compared with the 3.1p to 4.4p estimated in the government's white paper.

The nuclear industry does not have a good record of building reactors to time and budget. Widespread doubts about their ability have resurfaced because reactors being built in France and Finland are late and over-budget.

The danger of investing in potentially extremely expensive nuclear reactors is that they will crowd out investment in renewables and undermine energy efficiency, which are both much more effective at providing jobs and tackling climate change. If we divert attention, political effort and resources from these urgent programmes, needed to tackle climate change effectively, experience suggests we will miss our climate targets.

This is what has happened in Finland, where a government climate policy adviser recently concluded the country had concentrated so much on nuclear that it had lost sight of everything else. Now nuclear has failed to deliver on time, it has been "a costly gamble for Finland, and the planet", said the adviser.

(CLLR) EUAN MCLEOD

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<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/opinion/Exploding-myths.5362955.jp>

Councillor Euan McLeod (Letters, 11 June) tells us that nuclear power produces "around 75 jobs per year per unit of power compared with between 918 and 2,400 per year for wind power". The source of this data appears to be a paper from the 2004 International Conference for Renewable Energies.

Mr McLeod could have added that the same conference paper notes that bio-energy production from sugarcane requires between 3,711 and 5,392 jobs per year per Terawatt-hour of energy produced (not power, as noted in his letter of 11 June).

I don't imagine Mr McLeod would suggest emptying the cities to produce bio-energy from sugarcane on the basis of job creation.

The fact that nuclear power requires relatively little effort in plant operation is

an indication that it is a highly efficient and low-cost form of energy production, primarily due to the extraordinary energy density of nuclear fuels.

The efficient production of reliable, low-cost and clean energy is progressive, while intermittent, inefficient and expensive energy production will ultimately be socially regressive.

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<http://www.scotsman.com/opinion/Wind-farm--will-never.5354895.jp>

The news that there have been 42 applications for leases to develop wave and tidal energy in the Pentland Firth is extremely welcome, particularly because the investment will help create jobs and opportunities across the whole of Scotland (your report, 9 June).

South of the Border, the Environment Agency is urging local authorities to use their land and property for renewable energy to help tackle climate change and set an example to others by taking positive action. Glasgow City Council is doing just that by planning the construction of its own wind turbines. Glasgow is also looking at the possibility of harnessing renewable biogas from food waste and manure.

With the combination of the large-scale projects being promoted by the Scottish Government and smaller-scale local projects, a vision of a sustainable energy future for Scotland is emerging. Other schemes around Scotland reported recently range from solar panels installed on a school in Aberdeenshire, to a wind turbine installed in the grounds of a High School in Edinburgh, to ten offshore wind farms planned off our coasts.

These types of sustainable energy are a much more efficient way of creating jobs than investing in capital intensive nuclear power. It is estimated that nuclear power produces around 75 jobs per year per unit of power compared with between 918 and 2,400 per year for wind power. With the announcement in May (your report, 20 May) that Inverness College is to set up a micro-renewables training centre we can begin to see how promoting a sustainable energy future locally and nationally will be an essential part of replacing jobs lost through the recession.

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