

A lot of hot air: Wind farms 'working at just 21% of capacity'

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A report found the UK's heavily subsidised wind farms were working at just 21 per cent of capacity last year

Britain's wind farms produce far less electricity than their supporters claim – and cannot be relied upon to keep the lights on, a study from a conservation charity showed yesterday.

A damning report from the John Muir Trust found the UK's heavily subsidised wind farms were working at just 21 per cent of capacity last year.

Yet the renewable energy industry claims their turbines work at 28 to 30 per cent efficiency on average.

The Trust also found that for extended periods all the UK's wind turbines linked to the National Grid muster less than 20 megawatts of energy at a given point, enough power for fewer than 7,000 households to boil their kettles.

Stuart Young, author of the report, said: 'Over the two-year period studied, the wind farms in the UK consistently generated far less energy than wind proponents claim is typical.'

'Sadly, wind power is not what it's cracked up to be and cannot contribute greatly to energy security in the UK.'

The UK has more than 3,100 working wind turbines. According to the wind industry, they are capable of generating more than 5.2 gigawatts of electricity – enough for nearly three million homes.

Another 10,000 are planned for the next decade to meet EU climate change targets.

The report covered the output of around half of the UK's turbines. The rest supply local grids and their output is not included in day by day figures.

Industry body RenewableUK said the report was incomplete. It said onshore wind farms worked at 27.6 per cent capacity between 2006 and 2009 and offshore at 31.1 per cent.