

## **What are Surrey Climate Commission's Core Group's Views on Nuclear Power Generation in the UK?**

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### **Introduction**

A workshop was held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025 with members of the Surrey Climate Commission's Core Group. The aim was to investigate what participants' views are on nuclear power generation in the UK.

Following a short presentation outlining the current situation in the UK, participants were divided into two groups for a role play debate, with one group expressing pro- and the other anti-nuclear power arguments. Following this, each participant was asked to write their real opinion on post-its (or 'chat' for on-line participants). It is these views that were analysed to produce the following report<sup>1</sup>.

### **Opinions Expressed by Workshop Participants**

Participants expressed a range of views regarding nuclear power generation, primarily focusing on safety, long-term waste management, economic viability, and the role of renewable alternatives.

#### **Safety and Risk Concerns**

- There is uncertainty regarding whether the "as low as reasonably practicable" (ALARP) principle provides a high enough safety bar, particularly regarding health risks.
- The safety of modular reactors is not yet fully established and requires pilot programs for verification.
- While some argue the UK's nuclear safety record is strong, the potential scale of a nuclear accident is seen by some as an unacceptable risk, even if the probability is small.
- Nuclear facilities are viewed as potential targets for terrorist or military attacks in an unstable world.

#### **Nuclear Waste Management**

- The creation of hazardous waste that requires long-term management is a significant ethical concern for future generations.
- Some participants argued that modern reactor designs are significantly more efficient and would only add a small proportion to the existing waste stockpile.

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<sup>1</sup> Gemini was used to aid the analysis.

## **Economics and Governance**

- Nuclear power is described as an expensive energy source that is not commercially viable without heavy public subsidies.
- The industry is seen as overly centralized, benefiting large businesses and international investors rather than local communities.
- There is a perception that entrenched lobbyists influence government policy toward traditional nuclear options rather than innovative thinking.
- The long construction times for nuclear plants raise questions about how the UK will meet its power needs in the interim.

## **Renewables and Alternative Approaches**

- Many participants believe funds should be diverted from nuclear to proven, cost-effective renewables such as wind, solar, wave, and tidal power.
- The UK is seen as having missed opportunities to lead in renewable technology despite its natural advantages as an island.
- There is a call to shift from a "predict and provide" energy model to one focused on energy demand reduction measures, such as home insulation, and sharing resources equally.
- Some suggest that if nuclear is used, it should be as a temporary complement to solar and wind to provide a resilient, balanced energy mix.

## **Ethical and Social Considerations**

- The environmental and human impact, including health dangers to those mining nuclear fuel, must be a key consideration.
- The link between nuclear power technology and the potential development of nuclear weapons is a point of concern for some.
- The choice to pursue nuclear may affect the national psyche and the public's motivation to participate in reaching "net zero".

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, while some participants recognized nuclear power as a potential tool for addressing climate change and energy security, many highlighted its high costs, safety risks, environmental concerns, and long-term implications for future generations. Renewables were widely favoured as a more sustainable alternative, with calls for increased investment and community-driven energy solutions.

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