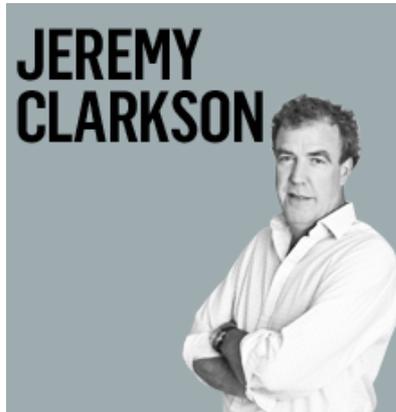


Even James ‘Thunder’ May couldn’t make wind farms work

Jeremy Clarkson Published: 18 March 2012



I predict that 30 years from now there will be just one wind turbine in Britain. It'll have been kept as a reminder of the time when mankind temporarily took leave of its senses and decided wind, waves and lashings of tofu could somehow generate enough electricity for the whole planet.

Schoolchildren will be taken to see it by newly enlightened teachers — in the way that today's children are invited to smirk at the Sinclair C5 — and then afterwards they will be shown a clip from last weekend's episode of the usually brilliant Countryfile programme to demonstrate just how silly the human race had become.

The normally trustworthy John Craven said with not a hint of doubt that climate change was fuelled by our love of cars, power, milk and lamb chops. Yup. He told us that cows and sheep produce methane, which is 25 times more damaging to the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, and must be fitted with a breathalyser as a result. Well, James May produces a lot of methane. I know because he's sitting next to me right now. Should we fit him with a breathalyser?

Craven also told us not to buy British tomatoes, which are somehow bad for the environment, and to eat instead South American bananas, which somehow are okay. It's all very confusing.

At the moment, you may be ambivalent about wind power. There are probably no plans to erect turbines near your house so you don't care, as long as your kettle works. You may have even heard from a Liberal Democrat energy minister who announced last week that living next to a bird-mincing, noisy monolith was good for you. Though what he meant to say was, "I like seeing my name in the papers." Fine, here it is. He's called Ed Idiot. I may have got the spelling a bit wrong but it's something like that.

The fact is that despite what Mr Idiot says, you will soon care very much about wind farms because the government is about to introduce a scheme in which big companies will be charged for emitting carbon dioxide. The idea is to encourage power companies to produce more energy from renewable sources. Of course, the cost of paying to emit all that CO2 will be passed on to you. The result: your fuel bill is about to sky-rocket. Only last week the executive director of Which? took the unusual step of telling the government it was "writing a blank cheque" with households' money. How much money? Oh, about £1.4 billion by 2015-16.

And why? Simply to keep a few lunatics happy. And they really are lunatics. Over in California green enthusiasts are planning to carpet the Mojave desert with solar farms that turn heat into power to feed Wilbur and Myrtle's La-Z-Boy swivel recliner.

Sound good? Well, yes, but now some native American lunatics have popped up to say, “How can we make some cash out of this?” Sorry. I don’t know why I said that. I’m muddling them up, perhaps, with Australia’s Aboriginals, who always announce after every great mineral find that the land has deep religious, spiritual and ecological significance.

The reason the left never get anything done is that they spend most of their lives arguing among themselves. Anyway, Hiawatha reckons the solar farms will not only destroy the natural habitat of the desert tortoise and the horny toad but also irritate the gods. He says he wants to use the sun for power but not if it disturbs “sacred sites, pristine desert, the turtles or the toad”. He then adds that he was placed on earth to be a guardian of “harmonious equilibrium”, and because of that, one green energy company has been forced to spend \$22m (£14m) — of Wilbur and Myrtle’s money — to ensure harmonious equilibrium prevails and the toad can continue to be horny in peace. Of course, this is normal. It is one of the things I enjoy most about members of the loony left. The reason they never get anything done is that they spend most of their lives arguing among themselves. It is hysterically funny and there was a prime example on Newsnight recently.

An angry man from the People’s Front of Judea argued that climate change was the biggest problem in the world ever, and that we had to embrace nuclear energy if we wished to live beyond next Thursday. Then up popped an even more angry woman from the Judean People’s Front, who said that to combat climate change we had to plunge into nature’s bountiful larder.

She said at one point we couldn’t use nuclear power because it required too many state subsidies. Forgetting, perhaps, that wind power needs even more. And that uranium is just as “natural” as wind.

What am I saying? She wasn’t forgetting it at all. She wants us to use wind power even if it doesn’t work. And perhaps that’s what people like her are really after. A world with no electricity. “What has electricity ever done for us? Apart from light, heat, warmth, better toothbrushes, iron lungs and Mildred’s vibrator?”

As far as the Judean People’s Front is concerned, a world without electricity will drastically reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. And it may have a point, because in the 16th century, before Michael Faraday ruined everything, Henry VIII had a broadly similar lifestyle to the people who mucked out his horses.

The problem with wind power is demonstrated well in Denmark, which embraced the technology years ago. And as a result not a single conventional power station has been shut down. They’re needed for the days when the wind doesn’t blow, or blows too strongly. Worse, ramping them up and down all the time uses more energy than keeping them working constantly. So the Danes have paid a fortune to build wind farms that don’t work, and, in return, their normal power stations are producing even more CO₂ than they did in the past.

And that’s all I’ve got to say on the subject because I’ve just remembered I’m doing some shows in Copenhagen later this month and I don’t want to be showered in Danish phlegm. It’d be disgusting because, of course, they don’t have enough power to charge their electric toothbrushes.