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## Green lobby and nuclear groups clash over role of renewable energy

Greenpeace dismisses EDF for protecting its 'vested nuclear interests' by undermining the future of renewable fuels

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**Terry Macalister**guardian.co.uk, Monday 16 March 2009 14.39 GMT

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Burton Wold wind farm in Northamptonshire. Photograph: David Sillitoe

EDF and E.ON have warned the government they may be forced to drop plans to build a new generation of nuclear power plants unless the government scales back its targets for wind power.

The demands – contained in submissions to the government's renewable energy consultation – reinforces the worries of wind developers that the two sectors cannot thrive simultaneously.

EDF of France and E.ON of Germany, two of the most high-profile nuclear supporters, said attempts to reach 35% of electricity generated by renewables is not only unrealistic but also damaging to alternative schemes such as nuclear plants.

"The deployment of high levels of intermittent renewables for electricity generation will require the construction of additional carbon-emitting plant as back-up for when renewables are not available to meet demand," EDF argued. "This is likely to be predominantly gas-fired and will therefore undermine efforts to reduce dependence on non-domestic fuel sources."

"A 25% electricity target will provide the best platform for further decarbonisation of electricity generation in the period beyond 2020, through a combination of further renewables, new nuclear and coal and gas with carbon capture and storage."

The attempt to dilute the contribution from renewables has infuriated the environmental lobby. "We've always said that nuclear power will undermine renewable energy and will damage the UK's efforts to tackle climate change – now EDF agrees," said Nathan Argent, head of Greenpeace's energy solutions unit.

"The National Grid shows that there is capacity to take well over 30% percent of our electricity from renewables. EDF are trying to block efforts to deliver on the most important technology to the UK to tackle climate change and keeps the light on in order to protect their own vested nuclear interests."

Friends of the Earth agreed. "The UK is the windiest country in Europe with the best wave and tidal resources," said Andy Atkins, the group's executive director. "We should be maximising renewables and harnessing as much of that clean, safe energy as we possibly can – not propping up the French nuclear industry.

"Nuclear power is no green alternative – it leaves a legacy of deadly radioactive waste that

remains dangerous for tens of thousands of years. And nuclear power plants simply cannot be built in time to deliver the cuts in carbon dioxide emissions that science says are needed."

E.ON said it was wrong to interpret the submission as an attempt to dismiss wind power completely.

A spokesman said the company had already built a raft of wind farms in Britain and had plans for more. "We believe in a mix of power sources, including nuclear and renewables, but we know that during the cold spell in January that some of wind farms were operating at less than 10% of capacity."

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