



Energy and the environment

Fossil fuels

Most of the UK's energy (74% at present) is generated by burning fossil fuels: coal, gas and oil. These fuels were created millions of years ago from dead plants and animals. When they are burnt in power stations, fossil fuels give off carbon dioxide. This gas makes it harder for the heat from the Sun to escape into space, which makes the Earth's atmosphere warmer. This could cause problems like making the sea levels rise and making some countries hotter and drier, which could affect people, plants and animals. This climate change could turn some land into desert and the ice caps at the North and South Poles could melt.



A rise in temperature could lead to more famine in hot countries and animals dying out around the planet.



If the polar ice caps were to melt then many coastal cities around the world would be flooded.

Improvements in technology have made power stations cleaner, but many people think that other ways should be found to generate electricity. Many people believe that nuclear power, which is not renewable but does not produce carbon dioxide, should also continue to be used.

Renewable energy

The race is on to find new ways to generate electricity without producing carbon dioxide. A lot of people believe that we need to use renewable sources of energy to do this because non-renewable fossil fuels such as gas are running out.

Renewable energy sources include:

- Solar energy
- Wind energy
- Hydroelectric energy
- Biomass