

## Nuclear power links to 'sham' UK energy review

*Consider the newspaper and the fact that this report was written by an environmentalist.*

The Observer  
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Key consultants working on the government's controversial energy review, which recommended a new generation of nuclear power stations, have strong links to the nuclear industry. (*Ed: It would be tough to review a medical problem without a medical expert involved!*)

Experts on both sides of the debate criticised the use of AEA Technology, formed by the privatisation of the Atomic Energy Authority, to handle hundreds of submissions to the review's public consultation earlier this year. The company has sold most of its nuclear businesses, but still has a nuclear waste unit, and senior executives and staff have links to the old authority and other parts of the nuclear industry.

Critics claim objections to nuclear energy were ignored or misrepresented in AEA Technology's report. However, The Observer can reveal that the report found nuclear power got by far the lowest support of 15 energy options. The revelations will add to widespread criticism that the review, published last month, was a 'sham', designed to push through nuclear energy because it was favoured by the Prime Minister.

Dai Davies, the independent MP whose question in the House of Commons forced ministers to reveal the identity of the consultants, said he was not anti-nuclear but was worried the company's industry links would undermine public confidence in the review.

'I wondered why it [nuclear] was being pushed and pushed and pushed,' said Davies, who stood as an independent after quitting Labour because he felt it had changed too much. 'Vested interests is the worry... Unless we are open and honest and debate openly, that suspicion is going to be with us for a long, long time.'

David Moorhouse, chief executive of Lloyd's Register, the risk management group which has analysed risks in the energy industry, said he also does not oppose nuclear, but was worried about using a company 'whose livelihoods depended on nuclear up until their sale into the private industry'. He said: 'While AEA may have given this its absolute best and neutral approach, it doesn't smell like that to the average man.'

Other experts who made submissions said they felt their evidence was underplayed and misrepresented; that there were concerns that ministers allowed only 12 weeks for the consultation; and that it was done before other important studies on nuclear waste and safety regulation were published.

There was praise, however, for AEA's publication of a summary table of the most-supported low-carbon technologies, which showed that nuclear power was the only one of the 15 to get more opposition than support. The widest support was for wind power, solar and bio-fuels. Of the 18 responses included in the summary which commented on nuclear, 10 were opposed to the nuclear option and eight were in favour. The 10 opposing submissions were all from individuals, the eight favourable responses were all from organisations.

'There's a great gulf between what's in the review and what's in the submissions,' said Bob Everett, lecturer in renewable energy at the Open University. 'When I think of all the people who sent in submissions, I think they'll be very, very angry, but not surprised.'

AEA Technology defended its professionalism, saying it wins work around the world because it has wide expertise beyond the nuclear industry and by 'being respected for the quality and independence of our work'. The company's clients include the European Commission, the World Bank and the UN.

'AEA Environment is a large independent environmental and energy consultancy,' it said. 'As well as covering the full breadth of environmental issues, we are acknowledged to be experts in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean coal technology. We are also acknowledged to have experience and skills in independently assessing the results of consultations on these and other environmental issues.'

The DTI said AEA Technology was chosen to help with the review because of its 'experience of this kind of work and in a broad range of sustainable energy issues'. A spokesman also defended the resulting review. 'We considered evidence received on energy policy in the round – both demand and supply – and the outcomes are a balanced package of measures on energy efficiency, on renewables, on cleaning up fossil fuels and on nuclear energy,' he added.

Last month Stephen Hale, the former special advisor to the previous Environment Secretary, Margaret Beckett, wrote in The Observer that the energy review was a 'sham' and the Prime Minister 'refused to consider the alternatives'.

Since the review, nuclear power has suffered a number of set-backs. The Finnish government announced that construction of the first of a new generation of nuclear power stations in Europe, seen as an important forerunner for the UK, would be delayed by a year. During the recent heatwave nuclear reactors in mainland Europe have had to be shut down, and others allowed to release harmful hot water into rivers. The US-based Nuclear Information and Resource Service opposition group also reported uranium prices have risen 600 per cent in five years, threatening nuclear's traditional operating cost advantage.