



UK Doesn't Use Coal Power for Two Months

What are fossil fuels?

- Fossil fuels are non-renewable fuels, such as coal, oil and gas.
- They can all be burned to create energy which can be used to generate electricity. They also produce greenhouse gases which cause climate change.

Due to the lockdown, there has been less demand for electricity. It has also been a record-breaking sunny May causing more solar power to be produced.

Therefore, last week a significant breakthrough occurred as Britain went for two months without using coal to create energy.

This is remarkable because coal has been used in powering Britain for over 130 years. In fact, even ten years ago, Britain got around 40% of its power from coal-fired power plants.

However, instead of coal, Britain has recently been using more renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind and tidal power. These are called renewable because they don't run out. They also don't release **greenhouse gases** as they make energy.

When burnt in a power plant, coal heats water up to create steam. This steam is able to power large **turbines**, which spin to create huge amounts of electricity. This is the electricity we use to power our homes, TVs and games consoles.

However, when coal is burned, it releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas which contributes to **climate** change.

Climate change is when the climate of an area changes. Scientists from all over the world have seen climates changing and becoming warmer.



Photo: Solar power involves using energy from the sun to create electricity.

This 'global warming' is caused because there are too many greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Because of the impact of climate change, the UK government is aiming to reach net zero carbon **emissions** by 2050.

The UK government says that this means that carbon released into the atmosphere by things like cars and factories must be completely balanced out by things which capture the carbon. To do this, the UK government wants to plant more trees and move away from using fossil fuels to create electricity.

Glossary

greenhouse gas	A gas that adds to the greenhouse effect.
turbine	A machine in which a wheel or rotor with blades on is made to spin by a fast-moving liquid or gas.
climate	The weather conditions in an area over a long period.
emissions	When gases are released.

Questions

1. Name a fossil fuel mentioned in the story.

2. Why did the warm weather in May help?

3. Tick to show whether each statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
Coal is bad.		
Coal is a fossil fuel.		
Tidal energy is renewable.		
Not using coal for two months is a huge achievement.		

4. 'In fact, even ten years ago, Britain got 40% of its power solely from coal.' This suggests that...

- Coal powered Britain alone.
- There were other power sources.
- Coal is useless.
- Solar power is more useful.

5. How do you feel climate change campaigners feel about this news?

6. Summarise the story in 15 words or fewer.

Answers

1. Name a fossil fuel mentioned in the story.

Accept coal, oil or gas.

2. Why did the warm weather in May help?

The warm weather in May helped because solar power was easier to make.

3. Tick to show whether each statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
Coal is bad.		✓
Coal is a fossil fuel.	✓	
Tidal energy is renewable.	✓	
Not using coal for two months is a huge achievement.		✓

4. 'In fact, even ten years ago, Britain got 40% of its power solely from coal.' This suggests that...

- Coal powered Britain alone.
 There were other power sources.
 Coal is useless.
 Solar power is more useful.

5. How do you feel climate change campaigners feel about this news?

Accept any reasonable answer which suggests they will find the news encouraging, e.g. I think that climate change campaigners will be pleased that coal has not been used for two months because it means that carbon emissions have decreased.

6. Summarise the key information in the story in 15 words or fewer.

Accept any reasonable summary that refers to the following and is 15 words or fewer in length, e.g. The UK has not used coal to power electricity for two months.