

Climate change: LED lights making a dent* in UK energy demand

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Installing a single low-energy LED bulb* may make a trivial* contribution to cutting the carbon emissions that are overheating the planet, but if millions choose LEDs, their efforts will make a small but significant dent in the UK's energy demand. Studies show making products more efficient has - along with other factors - already been slightly more effective than renewable energy in cutting CO2 emissions.

The difference is that glamorous renewables grab the headlines*. The field of energy efficiency*, however, is often ignored. Analysis of government figures says EU product standards on light bulbs, fridges, vacuum cleaners and other appliances have played a substantial part in reducing energy demand. Provisional calculations show that electricity generation in the UK peaked* around 2005. But generation per person is now back down to the level of 1984.

It's widely known that the great switch* from coal power to renewables has helped the UK meet* ambitions to cut carbon emissions. The report says the use of renewables reduced fossil fuel energy by the equivalent of 95 terawatt hours (TWh) between 2005 and now. And last year renewables supplied a record 33% share of UK electricity generation. But in the meantime*, humble energy efficiency has contributed to cutting energy demand by 103 TWh. In other words, in the carbon-cutting contest*, efficiency has won - so far*. And what's more, efficiency is uncontroversial, unlike wind and solar. And because firms and individuals are using less energy, that has compensated the rise in energy prices. So while the prices have gone up, often bills have gone down.

The UK government has consistently said it supports energy efficiency, but campaigners say it could do more. The UN*'s climate body also supports energy efficiency as a major policy objective, although the issue features little* in media coverage. But supporters of efficiency argue that increasing efficiency standards for everything from planes and cars to computer screens and freezers offers the best-value carbon reductions without the pain of confronting the public with restrictions on their lifestyle choices. Joanne Wade from the Association for Conservation of Energy told BBC News : "The huge improvement in energy efficiency tends to be completely ignored. People haven't noticed it because they are still able to have the energy services that they want. I suppose I should agree that the fact that no-one notices it is part of its appeal*."

- To make a dent : réduire de façon significative
- A bulb : une ampoule
- Trivial : insignifiant
- To grab the headlines : faire la une des journaux
- Efficiency : l'efficacité
- To peak : culminer
- the switch from ... to ... : le passage de .. à ...

- To meet ambitions : atteindre les objectifs
- In the meantime : pendant ce temps-là
- A contest : un concours
- So far : jusqu'à maintenant
- The UN : the United Nations
- to feature little : être peu présent
- An appeal : un attrait

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN THE FORM OF AN ESSAY. DO NOT COPY THE TEXT.

What is energy efficiency and what are the advantages of promoting it (compared with renewable energy in particular)?

Do you think efficiency is the solution to the problem of global warming ?
