

# Alternative energy takes flight

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Last week a mysterious blackout at London's massive Heathrow Airport, Europe's busiest and a global hub, caused chaos for travelers worldwide. But how many of them will know that it's the green energy transition in action... or lack of same? Because whatever caused the initial fire, the loss of power was long and devastating because the greenie virtue-signalers there ditched fast, reliable back-up diesel for sluggish feeble biomass that wasn't even designed to replace the main system just supplement it, while also rushing into solar and EVs. So when the power went out, it stayed out. How do you like that green energy transition now? Positively takes your flight away, doesn't it?

There were of course multiple stories about the incident. As you'd expect when over 1,300 flights are affected by this long-lasting shutdown of such a major facility. But virtually none of them mentioned this surely relevant factor that the energy system had been weakened on purpose by fanatics.

Instead, a typical update from *NBC* dated 4:20 PM EDT on March 21 declared that:

“Video shows no activity in Heathrow Airport's Terminal 4/ A video posted to X this morning showed no activity in Heathrow Airport's Terminal 4, which is still without power following a fire at a nearby substation.”

And the *New York Times*, for instance, wrote:

“Heathrow’s chief executive, Thomas Woldbye, said the airport had lost power equal to that of a midsize city. Backup systems worked, but were not enough to power the entire airport, he said. ‘This is unprecedented,’ he said, according to Sky News. ‘It’s never happened before.’”

Yeah, because Heathrow used to rely on diesel for backup. A widely-printed *AP* story did say “the fallout from the fire led to criticism that Britain is ill-prepared to deal with disasters” without getting into specifics, such as that the disaster in question was adoption of a Net Zero power system at the airport.

As eminent British science and economics commentator Matt Ridley snarked:

“The Heathrow power cut is already being dropped from the media. Why?

- Data centres in the area worked fine with back-up.
- Heathrow had insufficient back-up.
- It has boasted of prioritising green investment.
- So it presumably wanted to avoid investing in diesel back-up.

QED?”

The *Daily Telegraph* did discuss the accusation, commenting:

“Heathrow sources insisted it was not true that a traditional fossil fuel system would have been able to keep the power on. However, the claim raises questions about Britain’s resilience to attacks in a net zero future.”

As it might, indeed, raise questions about people managing an airport who cannot, or think they cannot, devise a backup power system of any sort that would work when needed. And about whether as a more general rule our society is not increasingly directed by people better at posturing than coping.

Thus another *Telegraph* item said:

“As the country woke up on Friday to the mayhem wrought by the fire at the substation, questions began to be asked about why Britain’s most vital airport was so vulnerable to a single blaze, as well as why back-up power was so woefully lacking.”

And they managed to extract some classic bureaucratese from Woldbye:

“in order for Heathrow’s other two substations to run the airport, the power supply to all the terminals needs to be re-engineered. While this is happening, Heathrow relies on its backup supply, which is not sufficient to run the entire airport. Speaking to reporters on Friday night, Thomas Woldbye, Heathrow’s chief executive explained: ‘We have three of these substations, each of them has a backup transformer. The backup transformer in this case also went and then we had to restructure the supply. So we’re not out of power but we have to restructure our power supply. To do that we have to close down systems – that is safety procedure, we will not go around that.’ He added: ‘Two substations can run the airport but we need to re-engineer the structure of the power supply for all the terminals and that’s what we were doing during the day, and then we have to restart all the systems and that’s what we’ve done, and we now see operation coming back.’...National Grid did not respond to a request for comment about the substation.”

And there is indeed, again, really no way to make it sound like an achievement. Or indeed, in the case of “re-engineer the structure of the power supply”, like an explanation instead of a verbal fog. Though certainly Heathrow’s self-congratulation about its greenness is still there for all to see.

So is the mess. As the *Daily Mail* began a story:

“At least 220,000 passengers have been left stranded in Britain and around the world after a fire shut Heathrow Airport for at least 24 hours – with Net Zero being blamed and the level of global travel chaos sparked by the outage being compared to 9/11. The UK’s busiest airport was forced to close on Friday after its main electrical substation exploded and set alight less than two miles away in the west London suburb of Hayes. The complete closure of Heathrow due to the loss of just one electrical substation is unprecedented and raises major questions for Heathrow and the Government. It has also left many stranded travellers raging and reduced to tears.”

It also mentioned the biomass claim, suggesting of all things that further details would help clarify its validity. As they would. But another story from the same outlet focused in on the initial assertion with:

“A British MP today claimed that the drive for Net Zero led to the complete shutdown of Heathrow Airport. Reform deputy leader Richard Tice claimed in a GB News interview that an aviation expert told him that Heathrow is moving from diesel back-up generators to biomass. However, Heathrow said in a statement the airport’s back-up energy systems worked ‘as expected’ when the substation fire started.”

So they expected failure? That’s the obvious conclusion given that what they did was not power the airport so it closed totally for many hours.

According to a vivid *Times* story:

“At Heathrow – an airport that needs ‘the same power as a small city’ – bosses quickly realised this was not a simple power cut. The airport has emergency generators but these are largely there to keep airfield lights on, rather than run the whole airport, and are believed to have worked as expected.”

Which isn't very reassuring since most people would assume that the emergency backup system at a major airport was designed to keep it running, not make it easier to see that the whole place was shut down.

Now imagine instead of it being just one airport, albeit an extremely major one, it was your entire economy. It would surely be a disaster not just worth reporting, but worth analyzing in terms of what idiot decided to scrap the power supply that worked for the one recommended by unicorn fanciers.