

[Bias at the BBC?](#) [1]

Written by [Sam Bowman](#) [2] | Monday 12 December 2011



We've been very pleased about the coverage our new report on renewable energy, [Renewable Energy: Vision or Mirage?](#) [3], has been getting. I was particularly impressed by the balanced coverage given by the BBC this morning, which fairly summarized the report along with some criticism from a spokesman from the World Wildlife Fund.

Unfortunately, their story now appears to have been heavily rewritten to give the thrust of the coverage to businesses that profit from state subsidies to the renewables sector. Even the headline has changed, from this morning's "Green energy push ?flawed? claims Adam Smith Institute" to this afternoon's "[Scottish Renewables slams 'flawed' energy report](#)" [4].

You can read the original version of the story [here](#) [5], since the BBC doesn't preserve its original news stories after they have been rewritten. Interestingly, the BBC story also covers a report by Reform Scotland that is strongly in favour of renewables ? remarkably, the BBC does not include any criticism of this paper despite its inclusion of renewable energy companies' criticisms of our report.

It's possible that this is all normal, but does anybody really believe that this would be the practice if our report was *in favour* of wind turbines? Somehow, I doubt it.

Update: In the comments, Man in a Shed points me to [this comparison](#) [6] of the two versions of the report. As he says, I think it makes the point rather well (click for full size):

[6]

Update 2: To answer my own question, I read through the four stories linked to at the bottom of the BBC's report on our paper:

- [Scotland 'setting example' at UN climate change summit](#) [7]: Quotes Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, giving out that the Scottish Executive hasn't done *enough* on renewables.
- [Osborne unveils £103m renewables funding for Scotland](#) [8]: Comments from Friends of the Earth and Pelamis Wave Power, a subsidy-funded firm, praising the fact that extra money is being spent on wave power.
- [SNP's 100% renewable energy plan is 'overambitious'](#) [9]: The Scottish Labour leader questions

the timetable (but not the policy) of making Scotland 100% dependent on renewable energy by 2020. One link to an Institution of Mechanical Engineers report, which "supports the aspiration of the Scottish government to fully exploit the potential for renewable energy that exists in Scotland".

- [Renewable energy production drops in Scotland](#) ^[10]: Quotes Pelamis Wave Power (again) and Scottish Renewables (again), both on the importance of putting *more* taxpayer money into renewables.

Obviously this is a small sample, but it's striking that, in the last four news reports, not a single comment was quoted questioning the basis of Scotland's renewable energy policy ? the only "dissenting" voices are the firms asking for more money from the taxpayer. Is there any other business sector that gets such an easy ride from the BBC?

[blog comments powered by Disqus](#) ^[12]

Source URL: <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/media-culture/bias-at-the-bbc>

Links:

[1] <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/media-culture/bias-at-the-bbc>

[2] <http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5809>

[3] <http://www.adamsmith.org/sites/default/files/research/files/renewableenergy2011.pdf>

[4] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-16131200>

[5] <http://peakoil.com/alternative-energy/green-energy-push-flawed-claims-adam-smith-institute/>

[6] <http://www.newsniffer.co.uk/articles/467718/diff/0/1>

[7] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-16000800>

[8] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-15690682>

[9] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-15578344>

[10] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-15122699>

[11] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript

[12] <http://disqus.com>