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The disaster that is Britain's solar power "success" [1]

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We're being told about the wonderful success of Britain's solar power revolution [3]:

> Half a million UK homes will have solar panels installed on their roofs by the end of this year, official figures show ? while the industry claims that figure could double within two years. Government data show that 495,459 solar panels had been installed, the vast majority on homes, by Sunday, since a programme of subsidies began in 2010. At the current rate of installation, of more than 2,800 panels a week, the half a million milestone will be passed by the end of the year, equating to about two per cent of UK households. The Solar Trade Association says it wants to reach one million installations in 2015.

This is, of course, entirely a disaster. For that half million installed, that million that will be, are entirely uneconomic and must be subsidised through those feed in tariffs. And the thing is it's all so unnecessary.

For as the industry itself, all those assembled greenies, tells us, solar PV will be grid compatible by 2016, 2017 at the latest. That is, it will be just as cheap to get our power from solar then as it will be from coal or natural gas. At which point, of course, we'll all start using the technology and no subsidies needed. So we've actually a disaster on our hands as we've been paying massive susidies, will continue to pay massive subsidies for the next 25 years, for the privilege of having brought adoption forward by perhaps two years.

This is insane.

And no, it's not good enough to say that it is the subsidies themselves that have brought the price down. For the UK subidies have had very little effect indeed on hte global price of solar cells. This has been driven both by technological breakthroughs (getting the price of silicon ingot down from $450 a kg to $20 or so now, slicing them thinner and so on) and the vast subsidies in Germany and China. And both of those are public goods: we all, globally, get to enjoy those effects without our having to subsidise people in the UK.

We should have saved our money and switched later.

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Links:

[1] http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/regulation-industry/the-disaster-that-is-britains-solar-power-success
[2] http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5778
[3] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/energy/10529090/Solar-panels-on-half-a-million-homes-by-end-of-the-year.html
[4] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
[5] http://disqus.com