Grid modernization united kingdom

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The most ambitious upgrade to the UK"s electricity grid in generations is under way - and it will have an impact on all of us.

For almost90 yearsthe UK"s electricity grid has served us well. So well, in fact, that it"s easy to take for granted. We put the kettle on and know it will boil. Flick a switch and there"s light. But with the shift from fossil fuels to cleaner energy, the grid, which we rely on so much in our day-to-day lives, is in need of an upgrade.

That"s because it was originally engineered to connect coal and gas-fired power stations that were built on the coal seams running down the centre of the country. But our reliance on fossil fuels is being replaced by renewable sources of energy, which are generated in large part by offshore windfarms, as well as solar. So significant new infrastructure is needed to connect that renewable energy from where it"s generated to where it"s needed by homes and businesses right across the country.

The Great Grid Upgrade - the largest overhaul of the UK"s electricity transmission grid in generations - represents a significant shift in infrastructure development. Joseph Northwood, Director ofPortfolio Development and Strategy, said: "Over the next decade we will be undertaking one of the biggest ever infrastructure build outs in the UK, with 17 major onshore and offshore projects to deliver. That is the step change required."

We need to buildfive times more electricity transmission infrastructure over the nextsix years than we"ve constructed over the past three decades - something that could provide a serious boost to the economy. According togovernment figures, The Great Grid Upgrade could createas many as 130,000 jobs and contribute up to ?11bn to the economy.

"These aren"t just engineering and construction jobs," says Joseph, "We"re going to need a huge range of skills to deliver these projects from design through to delivery - chartered surveyors, planners, IT and environmental professionals, procurement specialists, visual designers, project managers, apprentices and many more."

The wide geographic scope of the upgrades means new jobs will be distributed right across the country. And it"s not just the projects themselves that will stimulate job creation - connecting more renewables to the grid will see new job opportunities in other areas too, such as solar and wind, as well as the automotive sector (through increasing demand for electric vehicles) and heat pump market.

"It also creates an opportunity for the UK to put itself on the map as an economy that is leaning into the green energy transition," says Joseph. "If we develop those skills in the UK, they can be further utilised by other economies as they go through their energy transition."

Replacing expensive imported fossil fuels with cheaper, cleaner, domestic sources of energy will prevent the kind of big hikes in our bills we saw after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

"When you look at energy bills, the bit that fluctuates most is the commodity, because it"s a finite resource and it is less secure," says Joseph.

"The energy transition will bring that volatile component down. That resilience, the security and diversity of supply, is going to be delivered by this infrastructure and we are working hard to deliver a network that enables this, while delivering a secure, diverse mix of clean energy to our hospitals, schools, homes and businesses."

If we"re to achieve net zero by 2050, as the climate emergency requires us to, millions of UK households and many thousands of businesses will need to adopt new technologies. Joseph said: "Technological evolution and innovation create a demand for energy that has to be catered for."

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