WORLD FUTURE ENERGY SUMMIT

A ROUNDTABLE HOSTED BY THE WORLD FUTURE ENERGY SUMMIT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MASDAR

UK-UAE COLLABORATION FOR A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

2025

Built by RX
In the business of building businesses

Contents

Foreword

The UK and the UAE both enjoy a rich heritage of pairing industrial innovation with technical excellence, ensuring that they are ready for the challenges that technological and environmental changes inevitably bring. The UK has achieved rapid advances in offshore wind, battery storage and smart grid integration. The UAE, meanwhile, brings strong financial backing to the table, along with a proven track record of successfully scaling up clean energy projects at home and abroad, evidenced by its growing global portfolio.

Both nations have built up oil and gas industries, but are fully aware of the rewards attached to a speedy, successful transition, along with the pitfalls of failing to make this necessary change in time. Alloying their strengths could create a transformative partnership that quickens the pace of both sides' journey towards a net zero future.

To help foster this closer relationship, the World Future Energy Summit hosted a high-level roundtable discussion on 24th June 2025, at Masdar's London offices. Attended by 20 senior executives from clean energy companies, industry groups, financial and governmental bodies, this roundtable aimed to map out potential areas that are fertile for UK-UAE collaboration, along with a series of practical recommendations for achieving such meaningful cooperation.
The following review outlines the key themes to emerge from the roundtable discussion, finishing with a list of action recommendations for stakeholders affiliated with both the UK and UAE to take this international cooperation on clean energy to the next level.

Please note that The Chatham House Rule was in effect for this discussion – all participants were permitted to use, share and cite the information and talking points shared, but may not directly quote or attribute opinions to any individual present.

Barriers to Scaling up Clean Energy

One of the main priorities of the roundtable was to assess not only the plausible vehicles for deepening UK-UAE clean energy collaboration, but to determine the barriers against such an outcome. The moderator asked, in effect, for attendees to lay out their central concerns that are reducing or even stifling the speed of upscaling renewables and other means of achieving a cleaner global energy industry.

Political turbulence was front and centre in the discussion, as the undeniable upheavals of recent months have contributed to greater caution in both the clean energy markets and government-backed project pipelines. "Uncertainty" was the prevailing word, one that signals a distinct cooling of investor confidence, from private equity firms to government infrastructure authorities. In a climate of uncertainty, explained one participant, it is much harder to contemplate more ambitious methods to speed up the global transition:

> **We are in an 'anti-hype cycle' right now regarding various emerging clean energy techs and formats, particularly hydrogen. The hype is long gone, and the anti-hype makes it difficult to build momentum as too many potential investors are uncertain about making moves; they're just waiting to see when and where the next big thing happens.**

This 'anti-hype' extends beyond investors, as multiple attendees pointed towards the increasing backlash against net zero in areas of the UK political spectrum, with some political figures heralding it as being "too expensive" in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis and the government's plan to hike defence spending up to 5% by 2035.1 The scepticism of UK citizens in key political battlegrounds has translated into hesitancy at multiple levels of government to act with ambition on investments and supportive policies.

> **There has been too much hesitancy in the UK regarding the industrial strategy on net zero and clean energy in general. We've got to show the economic benefits of the net-zero agenda as well as its environmental necessity – people are getting impatient for the promised influx of high-skilled jobs, for the cheaper utility bills and the broader societal benefits.**

Uncertainty, hesitancy, scepticism – these are the three crucial concerns held by the roundtable participants when it comes to obstacles in the way of a faster clean energy transition. While these factors apply globally and are by no means unique to the UK the governments and industry leaders will need to consider them carefully when planning their respective strategies to galvanise capital flows and support more ambitious projects.

Government Signals – Backing Words with Action

> **There is great potential to turn the UK-UAE working relationship on clean energy into an engine for progress, but it needs more than goodwill. It needs to be powered by a willingness on both sides to invest more, to de-risk more, and to move more quickly. This starts at the top, with clear signals from both governments that they are ready to take those big, necessary decisions.**

At every stage of the discussion, attendees emphasised the importance of government-led actions and communications as a means of addressing the major concerns raised around the table.
From the UK Government perspective, quickly scaling up clean energy infrastructure is a priority, but it's also a complicated challenge at the best of times. With constrained finances, every major spending decision undergoes close scrutiny, as evidenced by the opposition to the recently announced £14 billion spend on nuclear investments, including the construction of the Sizewell C nuclear plant.2 Clearly, it remains challenging for the UK Government to make investment decisions that will outlast the current parliamentary term. "It's difficult to get fully funded long-term spending plans – say 15 years – approved, due to concerns about handcuffing future governments to major infrastructure investments that they may not agree with, hence the need for annual spending reviews and other forms of oversight," explained one attendee.

To unlock its full clean energy potential, the UK needs substantial Foreign Direct Investment from trusted partners. The UAE is well placed to assist, given its strong capital reserves. "What we need now is clear, unambiguous language from both governments," said one participant. "If they can signal to the market that they are serious about deepening the relationship, and allowing the necessary capital to flow into UK clean energy sectors, that will be a strong prompt for private equity to follow suit."

Further, the UK Government can mitigate investor risk by helping developers secure long-term offtake agreements—such as Contracts for Difference, fixed-price power-purchase agreements, or carbon-capture service contracts—that lock in revenue streams before construction begins. With development timelines stretching beyond a decade for nuclear plants and six years or more for large wind farms, and with significant sunk costs, investors need firm, bankable cash-flow certainty rather than assumptions about post-completion market demand. One attendee pointed to a major UK CCUS project where government-backed commitments proved decisive in unlocking finance.

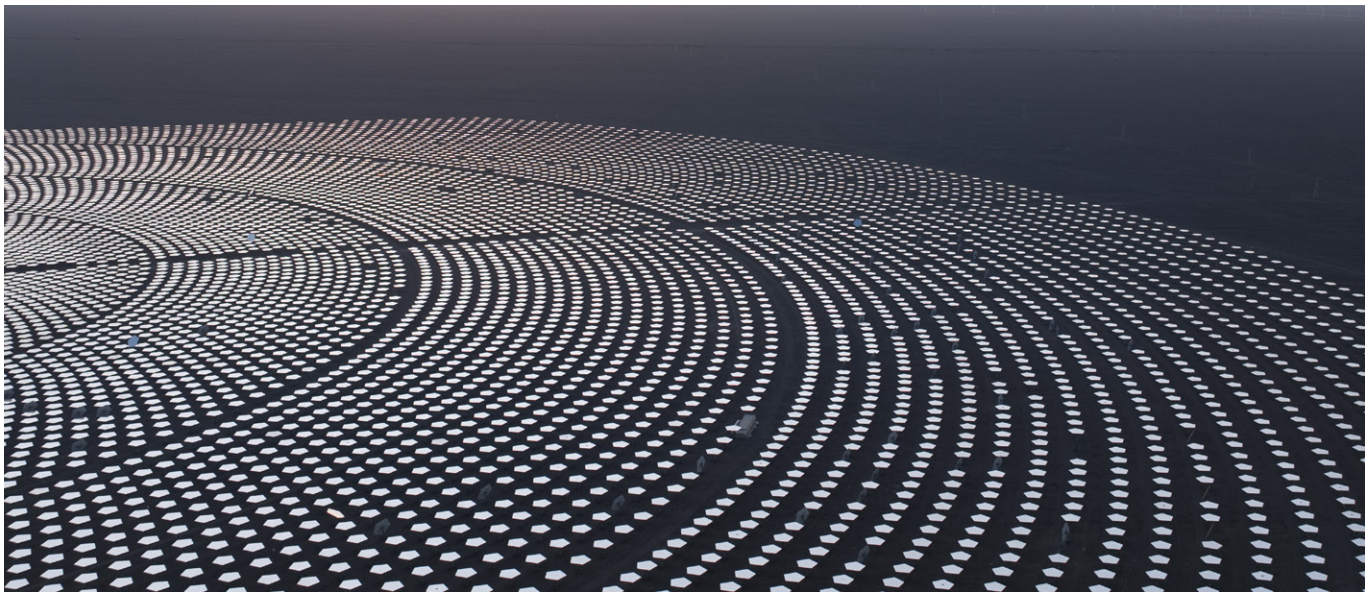
> **We raised £8 billion in funding, but that was largely due to the way the UK Government structured the contracts to give investors the necessary confidence that they will see a return on investment, by guaranteeing that the CO2 supply and storage are matched. This avoids the 'chicken and egg' dilemma where investors worry about supply and demand mismatch.**

Beyond contracts, attendees agreed that wider regulatory frameworks are an essential piece of the puzzle for securing reliable market demand. One member highlighted the impact of the UK Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Mandate invoked in January 2025 (suppliers must now ensure a 2% minimum blend of SASF with conventional jet fuel, rising to 10% in 2030) in signalling the direction for the industry – the push towards sustainable fuels has started.3 Meanwhile, there is no similar mandate in the UAE, merely guidelines for voluntary SAF usage, and its adoption is likely suffering as a result.

Regulatory mandates help build demand while giving time for the industry to chart their adoption strategy. The same participant urged the UK and UAE governments to support the strengthening of such measures, giving them the necessary "teeth" to prompt both investors and industry incumbents to accelerate their switch to cleaner fuels and energy sources.

Overall, the message from the attendees was simple – think long term, plan long term, act more quickly. Putting out strong signals that point towards deeper and more ambitious partnerships targeting major infrastructure deals will help address the current cycle of investor uncertainty. It's equally important that governments find ways to help de-risk such investments from private sources, through minimum offtake contracts, stronger mandated use of clean energy and fuels, and other means to ensure that the industry's transition will represent viable ROI.

> **Governments need to remember the long-term goal is to create a clean energy industry. Creating new jobs, securing more capital – these things are good but they're not the end goal, they're a beneficial byproduct. If they want investors to get on board with a faster wholesale transition, they're going to have to show everyone an industrial strategy that reflects that objective, and stick to it.**



Co-Funding – Bridging the Finance Gap

While governments are instrumental in setting the direction and tone of the clean energy transition, they are not capable of funding it alone. Privately managed funds must also be encouraged invest in a way that "moves the needle" faster.

One attendee from the finance industry pointed towards the current funding gap that is undermining a worryingly high number of otherwise viable clean energy startups and even mid-sized technology companies.

> **So many of them are really struggling to cross the middle part between pilot project and full-scale deployment – They're dying on the vine for the lack of $20 million, which should not be that hard to find. They have proven the concept; they just need the funding to get things moving and become profitable.**

The same attendee then pointed towards Masdar's track record of such targeted investments that have routinely translated into financial and technological success stories. They urged leading UAE players to exhibit that entrepreneurialism more readily in the UK, given that there is no shortage of viable prospects. "Once you have something that's up and running for 6-12 months, everyone else will crowd in, but the UAE can take the lead and benefit as the funders of game-changing IP," they said.

At the larger end of the investment scale, there is also ample opportunity for UAE public and private investors to commit to major infrastructure projects that deal not only with the production of clean energy, but also the wider supply chain, as explained by one attendee:

> **The UK needs a lot of investment into the infrastructure and supply chain. Production facilities certainly, but also transport vessels, ports, transmission lines, and so on. The UAE has a great deal of experience investing heavily into these kinds of supply chains, and its leading companies are well placed to do that for the UK.**

Multiple attendees specifically highlighted the value of public-private-partnerships (PPPs) as effective vehicles for de-risking large-scale projects, especially those targeting nascent or unproven markets. PPPs are a key tool for making better use of the UK and UAE's wealth of innovation and technical expertise in clean energy by bringing in multiple stakeholders from across the public/private divide, who collectively have a wider range of vested interests in the project beyond a simple profit motivation. Governments are keen to advance their net zero agenda, while private investors are eager to broaden their own sustainability portfolio, while also positioning themselves well to comply with rising regulatory requirements.

After exploring opportunities for co-investment in the UK and UAE, the conversation turned outwards, with attendees highlighting how both countries have invaluable opportunities to support one another when funding clean energy ventures in other countries. One participant noted how around 70-75% of all investment capital for renewables globally flows through London, making it the premier hub for green financing. This concentration of capital and financial expertise is another rich vein for potential UK-UAE cooperation, as closer ties between the two countries could allow Emirati funding to flow more effectively through London to wherever it is most needed and best deployed.

For its part, the UAE is becoming increasingly attractive to UK investors as a gateway into African clean energy markets. One attendee described Abu Dhabi as the "perfect springboard" into Africa, due to the UAE's proactive efforts to create free trade deals across the continent, saying:

> **"If anything, both UK and UAE investments in Africa are underweighted, and they don't represent the scale of the opportunity. Trade deals aren't just about shaving off percentages of tariffs, they also allow both partners easier access to key technologies. I think we'll soon see a lot more UK companies coming into African markets through the UAE."**

Overall, the roundtable participants see a wide (and widening) range of co-investment opportunities opening up for the UK and UAE, both in each other's markets and those of third parties. Again, the unifying theme was that investors across the public/private spectrum should recognise the urgency of securing "first mover" benefits on crucial emerging technologies as well as core infrastructure projects. The consensus was that despite uncertainty in multiple sectors, markets are likely to become crowded once again, particularly once the combination of government-produced industry strategies and strengthening regulatory frameworks set the tone for faster clean energy adoption.

Areas of Interest

While the roundtable mostly stuck to the main strategic considerations around UK-UAE collaboration – from potential barriers to supportive government actions and general investor sentiments – attendees also cited specific clean energy sectors where these two nations had a particular overlap of capabilities and interests.

CCUS: Given that both the UK and UAE have a rich Oil & Gas heritage, both nations are eager to retain the expertise, goodwill and cooperation of these sectors by involving them in the transition. "We need it all," as one speaker put it. "We need carbon capture alongside the renewables scale up, otherwise the hydrocarbons we rely on to satisfy current global electricity demand will stay dirty."

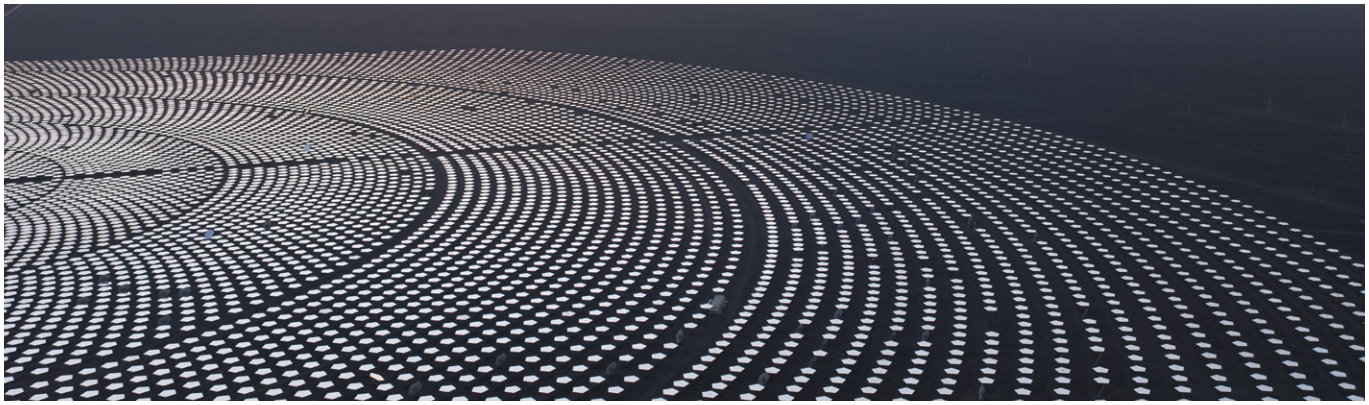
Offshore Wind: Floating offshore is of growing interest to the UAE as its technical efficiency improves, making the economic and environmental case stronger with each major deployment. The UK now boasts the second largest offshore wind market globally, with 15.9GW of grid-connected capacity,[4] and the UAE could benefit from UK expertise while supporting its rise with further investment into an established market with room to grow.

Geothermal: Though tangential, one attendee mentioned that geothermal is another plausible avenue for cooperation and co-investment, as recent UK success in Cornwall may lead to a further development of geothermal production capacity in the region, up to 4GW of electricity (more than the Hinkley C Nuclear power plant) with 13GW of byproduct heat suitable for heating local businesses and housing.[5]

Solar: As the cheapest and fastest-growing form of clean energy, solar is one of the "least risky" prospects for investors. With so much of the global scale up of solar occurring in the GCC, the UAE is a natural destination for UK investment but also knowledge exchange. UK companies, and the government itself, can continue to learn more about supply chain development around solar from the UAE experience, as it scales up production and storage capacity alongside grid integration and optimisation efforts.

Batteries: Storage is a crucial frontier for scaling up clean energy and the key to solving issues around renewable intermittency and grid load balancing. Both the UK and UAE are eager to move ahead with clean energy production efforts that feature major on-site storage capacity, and are well placed to support one another with suitable projects.

Waste-to-Energy: The UAE is rapidly accelerating its WTE capacity with pioneers like Bee'ah leading the way on advanced facilities that feature increasing capacity alongside higher energy production rates. The UK is actively pursuing WTE technologies as part of its broader strategy to achieve net-zero emissions and transition to a circular economy, and a closer partnership with a hub of technical excellence like the UAE could fuel these ambitions.



Action recommendations

Greater UK ambition is needed: Attendees believe that the UK is starting to lose its leadership position in clean energy innovation due to an inability to take valuable IP and scale it up sufficiently quickly. Faster decision making, clearer intent signalling from the government, more stringent regulatory measures to mandate clean energy usage and sustainable fuel blending – these are all means to inject greater ambition back into the clean energy transition.

Clarity will inspire confidence: More broadly, governments can help restore investor confidence at home and internationally by giving unequivocal signals of support for clean energy ventures, both in terms of direct investment and supportive regulatory measures. Guaranteeing demand through clear contract terms, and other de-risking approaches will be essential for allaying investor fears and building momentum for larger project pipelines.

Speed is key: Technological innovation is emerging across clean energy sectors, particularly in the UK, but often fails to take off due to the lack of relatively modest funding. More ambitious financing, through PPPs or other forms of de-risked co-investment, could quickly net the UK and UAE highly valuable IP suitable for deployment at home or in other global markets. Attendees believe that such investments are worth making now, before the industry heats up again and becomes crowded with FDI flows from across the world.

Think long term: Companies, not just government agencies, need to think carefully about their long-term strategy for positioning themselves effectively within the global clean energy transition. Looking beyond the uncertainties of the day, both sides must ensure that they aren't "fixated on quick growth, quick profits and more jobs", but have a viable long-term vision that best enables the move to net zero. A closer UK-UAE partnership could strengthen the national strategies of both nations, to the benefit of businesses on both sides.

Think "big picture": From solar and wind to batteries and carbon capture, there are innumerable avenues suitable for deeper UK-UAE collaboration. To leverage them effectively, stakeholders on both sides will need to think strategically and find ways to link up clean energy supply chains. Led by government actions and guidelines, private enterprise should be looking to build up UK-UAE synergies that go beyond a single clean energy project or investment, and create the right conditions for more integrated clean energy ecosystems.

Roundtable Participants

Husain Al Me CMgr, CEng MIEM,MIAM
Director, Global Offshore Wind & UK
Masdar

Damian Brandy
Vice President, Internal Affairs
Taqa

Gaurab Chatterjea
Low Carbon Solutions
Shell

Emerson Clarke
Chief Policy Officer
GWEC

Chris Daykin
VP Hydrogen & CCUS – UK
BP

Ian Douglas
CEO
XLCC

Alicia Eastman
Managing Director
APC Investors

Laura Gillons
VP Marketing & Public Affairs
Carbon Clean

Alex Haynes
Head of Business Dev - Energy Transition
Petrofac

Martin J. Nagell
Director, Responsible Investing
Mubadala

Bradley Jones
Executive Director
UK - UAE Business council

Danielle Lane
Director of Offshore Dev. UK & Ireland
RWE

Andrew Mennear
Senior Director Gov. Affairs
BP

Alexander Milne
Co-Head of Global Origination for UK Export Finance
UK Export Finance

Alex Milward
Director, Carbon Capture Utilization & Storage
DESNZ

Nikunj Panchal
Global VP - Energy Infrastructure Transition
Ricardo

Line Sorensen
Head of M&A
Shell

Kawther Taleb
Head of Policy & Campaigns
UK - UAE Business council

Martyn Tulloch
Director Energy Transition
Net Zero Technology Centre

Lenmart Van Walsum
Director, EMEA
Global Solar Council

Moderator

Oisin Commane
Head of Content - ADSW
Masdar

About Masdar

Masdar (Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company) is one of the world's leading clean energy companies. Masdar is advancing the development and deployment of solar, wind, geothermal, battery storage and green hydrogen technologies to accelerate the transformation of energy systems and help the world meet its net-zero ambitions.

Established in 2006, Masdar has developed and invested in projects in over 40 countries with a combined capacity of 51 gigawatts (GW), providing affordable clean energy access to those who need it most and helping to power a more sustainable future.

Masdar is jointly owned by TAQA, ADNOC, and Mubadala, and is targeting a renewable energy portfolio capacity of 100GW by 2030 while aiming to be a leading producer of green hydrogen by the same year.

masdar.ae

About the World Future Energy Summit

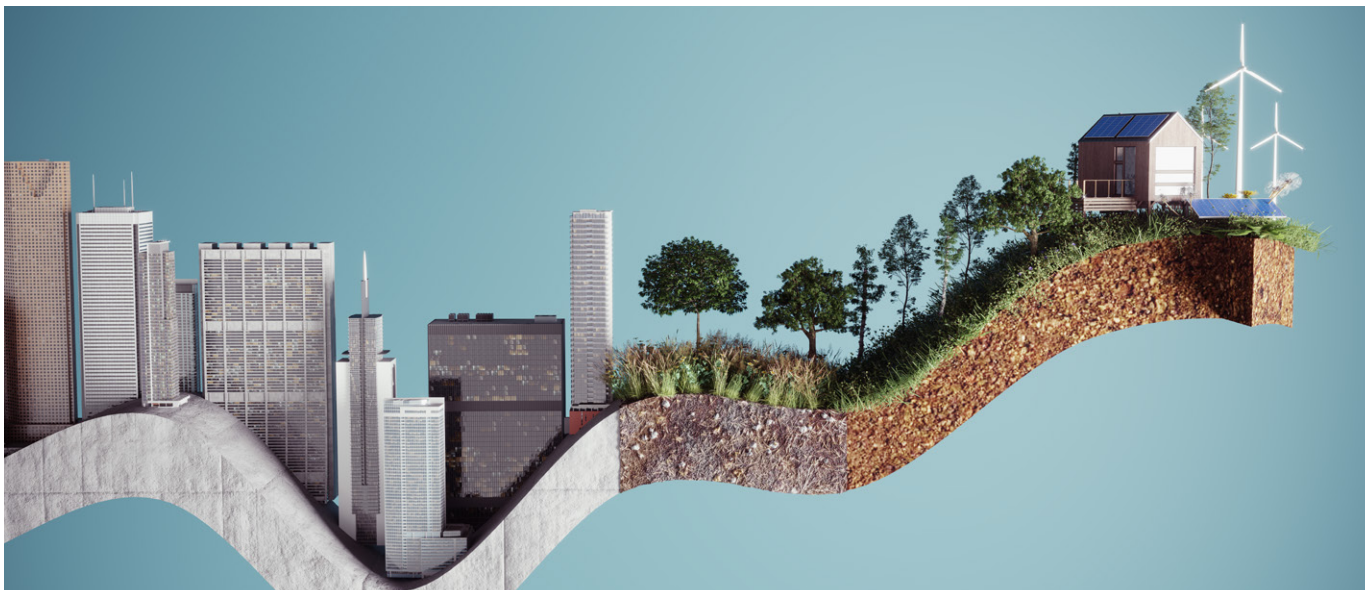
The World Future Energy Summit is the leading global event for clean energy and sustainability, bringing together innovators, business leaders, policymakers, and investors to turn ambition into action.

Over three days, the international exhibition and conference addresses the most pressing challenges of our time—clean energy, climate change, sustainable cities, water security, waste management, green finance, and the transformative power of artificial intelligence.

By uniting almost 42,000 attendees from public, private, and non-profit sectors, it serves as a critical bridge between bold policy and real-world solutions.

worldfutureenergysummit.com

@worldfutureenergysummit



References

[1] BBC, UK vows to spend 5% of GDP on national security by 2035, 23/06/2025
[2] The Guardian, Sizewell C power station to be built as part of UK's £14bn nuclear investment, 10/06/2025
[3] Gov.UK, Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Mandate, 14/05/2025
[4] Crown Estate, Offshore Wind Report 2024
[5] Eden, Geothermal potential in Cornwall and the UK