Renewable energy offset global rise in fossil fuel use in first half of 2022

Renewable energy offset global increases in fossil fuel use in the first half of this year – preventing an overall rise in coal and gas emissions.

According to the energy think tank Ember, increases in wind and solar power met more than three-quarters of the demand in electricity growth during that period – with hydropower making up the rest.

This prevented a possible 4% increase in fossil fuel generation, saving $40bn (£35bn) and 230 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide.

“Wind and solar are proving themselves during the energy crisis,” Malgorzata Wiatros-Motyka, senior analyst at Ember, said.

“The first step to ending the grip of expensive and polluting fossil fuels is to build enough clean power to meet the world’s growing appetite for electricity.”

Ember’s study used electricity data from 75 countries, which make up 90% of global electricity demand, comparing data from the first six months of 2021 to the same period in 2022.

It showed that globally we used 389 terawatt hours (TWh) more energy than the previous year – but we generated an extra 415 TWh.

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Wind and solar power met 92% of China’s electricity growth, 81% of the US’s, but just 23% of India’s.

Coal use increased 15% across the EU – to make up for a shortfall in nuclear and hydro generation – but this was offset by a reduction in coal use in China (3%) and the US (7%).

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However, beyond the first six months of 2022 in July and August, coal and gas generation increased again.

Ember said governments and energy companies need to continue investment in renewables to ensure the energy and climate crisis are not exacerbated further.