AUDIO SCRIPT

LISTENING

Task 1.

Presenter: Love them or hate them, huge wind turbines are becoming a more frequent sight along our motorways. Along with solar panels, they are an important source of renewable energy. But how effective are wind farms at providing the energy we need? Joining me to discuss this is Lisa Baum, a renewable energy expert. Lisa, is wind power the future?

Lisa: I very much think it is. There are so many benefits to wind. It's so much cleaner than gas and safer than nuclear. Wind farms are becoming cheaper to build and more efficient to run, making them better alternatives to gas or nuclear. European countries are leading the way. Germany already gets over ten percent of its energy from wind power and many EU countries will have already reached their wind power targets by 2020.

Presenter: But I've read wind power is unreliable. What happens when the wind doesn't blow?

Lisa: Obviously, that is an issue. But the technology is improving all the time which means that even the slightest gusts of wind can generate electricity. Also, there is big investment in off-shore wind farms, which are much more reliable. The largest off-shore wind farm is in the UK and there are 175 wind turbines producing 630 megawatts of electricity.

Presenter: That sounds impressive.

Lisa: Well, believe it or not, the biggest on-shore wind farm in Europe is even bigger. 240 wind turbines on a 110-kilometre site near the Black Sea in Romania. But despite there being 65 more wind turbines, its capacity is smaller than the London site's.

Presenter: Because the wind at sea is stronger?

Lisa: Exactly.

Presenter: So, what does the future hold?

Lisa: Well, as the price of building wind farms comes down further and the efficiency of the turbines goes up, it is hoped that countries will continue to replace fossil fuel power stations with cheaper, cleaner wind farms.

Presenter: Thank you for joining us.

Lisa: My pleasure.

Task 2.

I grew up in Ireland, which has a moderate climate. The summers aren’t very hot and the winters aren’t particularly cold, and the one thing you can depend on is that it will probably be cloudy and damp. There have been a few major storms, of course, including Hurricane Charley in 1986 and Hurricane Katia in 2011, and we’ve even had a major snowstorm or two, but Irish weather isn’t known for its drama. You can imagine my shock

when I moved to the Midwest of the United States to go to university and had my first experience of a major thunderstorm.

What surprised me most is that you can actually feel a change in the air pressure as the storm approaches. Your body feels heavier, and there is a sense of tension in the air. Not only that, the clouds became so thick that they completely blocked out the sun. It was only lunchtime and I thought that night had fallen. And when the storm was actually on top of us, it felt like the apocalypse had arrived. Thunder exploded again and again, the sky lit up like huge camera flashes, the wind roared and hail the size of golf balls fell from the sky. I was terrified.

My first major storm in the US left me shaking and breathless. At least, I thought it was a major storm. For students who had grown up in the area, it was nothing more than a typical passing event, hardly worth noticing.

Actually, the only reason anyone talked about the storm afterwards was because a very old tree on campus had been hit by lightning and had split into several pieces.

Oddly enough, this storm opened my eyes to the fascination of extreme weather, and after a few more experiences I decided to concentrate on meteorology for my university degree, which led to my job as a television meteorologist. I never quite got used to the storms in Iowa, but I certainly developed a respect for the powers of nature.