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Positive climate news you may have missed in 2025

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Workers assembling an electric car at the Volkswagen electric car factory in Zwickau, Germany. — Getty Images/TNS

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By DAVID FICKLING

SO much climate news comes out in any given week that it can be hard to keep up with it all. Much is gloomy, but there are positive developments all the time – so many, in fact, that it's easy to miss some of the things that have been happening.

Some of the overlooked climate stories can give us an idea of the immense amount of change happening as the world transitions to new sources of energy amid a gathering environmental crisis. Here are some major developments in 2025:

> Some grids have almost decarbonised

You might not know it from the prevailing mood of Trump-era defeatism, but in some parts of the world, decarbonising electricity is approaching its endgame. Roughly three-quarters of power generation in the United Kingdom and Europe this year came from non-fossil sources, putting them in about the same place as Brazil and Canada, whose vast hydroelectric resources traditionally gave them some of the cleanest grids.

With more renewables added each year, current projects under construction and in late-stage development should put Europe's grid between 80% and 90% clean energy, the level at which further advances will start to get far more difficult without massive battery usage, new flexible technologies, or both. That means a looming slowdown in renewable deployment, something that many will regard as some sort of failure. In fact, it's a testament to monumental achievement so far, and an example the rest of the world should now emulate.

> EVs are going global

If you were looking only at the parlous state of electric vehicle sales in some developed markets – the US, say, or Japan or Italy – you might think the entire technology is faltering. Far from it. Plug-in cars have been comprising more than half of all sales in China and just under a third in Europe in recent months. More dramatic, though, is what's been happening in less-noticed developing countries.

EVs have had a sales share of more than 20% in recent months in Turkey, Thailand, and Vietnam, while Indonesia isn't far behind. Markets as diverse as Nepal, Ethiopia, Laos, Armenia and the United Arab Emirates are adopting EVs far faster than many developed countries. Some 27.3% of all passenger vehicle sales worldwide in the September quarter came with a plug, according to BloombergNEF (New Energy Finance). If you think the EV revolution is losing speed, it's probably just a sign that your own domestic market is getting left behind.

> A new dawn for solar

China's solar industry has endured a season in hell. We argued that rising sales and thinner spending would restore profitability. China's big six solar players have indeed cut capital expenditures to about half of last year's level, but new rules at home and ongoing trade protectionism elsewhere mean BloombergNEF expects installations this year to rise only about 16% – a pedestrian pace for this sector. Far from returning to the black, losses are deepening, with little sign of relief in sight.

> Europe goes electric

Sales of plug-in cars in Europe hit a speed bump in late 2024, leading many to predict that the region's shift to electric vehicles was stalling. We argued the slowdown was temporary, with performance in 2025 likely to far outstrip predictions of 3.2 million sales. That looks to be on the money. By the end of September, the year-to-date growth rate was 28%, which should translate into nearly 3.9 million sales across the full year, just a pip short of the four million number we pegged.

> Charging up the grid

A key element of electricity bill increases after Russia's invasion of Ukraine was the pivotal role played by surging gas in setting the cost of power across the entire market. We argued that the rise of lithium-ion was likely to shave these peaks by giving batteries a bigger role and flattening the extreme spikes seen in previous years.

That seems to be playing out in some places: Wholesale prices in Australia's main grid fell about 8% from a year earlier in the September quarter, thanks in part to reduced volatility and batteries undercutting gas.

The course of the energy transition never did run smooth – but I've noticed that events in retrospect look much better. Let's hope that pattern plays out in 2026, too. — Bloomberg Opinion/Tribune News Service

David Fickling is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering climate change and energy.