

Boosting supply to curb inflation

As the electricity regulator reviews the resilience of the UK grid and generating system it needs to consider how it can encourage more investment in additional capacity. The government and big business tell us we are living through an electrical revolution when more people and businesses will switch from gas heating and petrol and diesel transport to electric versions. Meanwhile the grid operator has had to go back on the idea of closing all the coal power stations in order to keep the lights on when the wind doesn't blow, showing we can be close to the margins even on a summer day. The case seems overwhelming to put in more capacity.

It is true there is considerable further investment underway in wind farms. To solve our problems these need to be linked to battery or hydrogen based storage of output when there is a surplus to handle the shortages when the wind does not blow. It is going to take time to build enough nuclear to give us reliable baseload capacity. Indeed this decade sees the closure of most of our nuclear, making the problems of adequate supply more difficult. We will need sufficient conventional power stations to plug the gaps pending the technological and commercial breakthroughs needed in renewable power delivery. The grid managers need to keep all the capacity we still have and make sure it is available. We also need some more reliable capacity before we can store the wind energy.