

Energy self sufficiency

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of (a) the implications for his policies of rising UK import dependence in energy and (b) the potential to expand domestic production. (96751)

Tabled on: 04 January 2022

Answer:

Greg Hands:

Great Britain benefits from highly diverse sources of energy. The Government plans to increase energy production from a variety of sources, including nuclear and hydrogen will ensure that dependency on foreign fossil fuels is decreased. Around half of Great Britain's annual gas supply is already met by domestic production, and Great Britain's electricity mix includes significant sources of domestic generation.

The Government is taking steps to support investment in new sources of electricity generation, including 40 GW of offshore wind by 2030, a first of a kind power plant enabled with Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage technology, and new nuclear projects. The Net Zero Strategy also sets out the Government's ambition to decrease Great Britain's reliance on natural gas, such as by blending hydrogen into the gas grid.

The answer was submitted on 14 Jan 2022 at 15:01.

This answer is most disappointing. It states that we will rely on future nuclear and hydrogen based power. Nuclear power will decline this decade, with no new station not currently in build possible before the 2030s. All but one of our current nuclear stations will close this decade. There is no large scale hydrogen currently available and that too will take time to build up, with current plans not large. Hydrogen will need to be green hydrogen produced from renewable electricity, as it is not a primary energy source.

The phrase "around half of GB's natural gas is already met by domestic production" implies it is on the rise, whereas we have gone from national self sufficiency to under one half so far this century. UK policy has been to restrict new UK gas extraction and to manage a planned decline in UK output. That is still the official policy though Ministers have started talking about adding to current gas fields.

The chilling phrase that electricity includes "significant sources of domestic generation" shows officials are keen to press on with making us more dependent on imported power. Last century we used to plan to be self sufficient with a margin of excess capacity to take care of shut downs of major power stations and surges in demand. We should revive that policy.

The wish to create 40GW of offshore wind needs to be linked to methods of

storing the power when the wind blows, especially at night, to help with periods of low wind. Storage could be via production of hydrogen or battery or pump storage. Yesterday our substantial wind capacity only managed to meet 1% of our power needs, demonstrating that rated capacity is a meaningless figure to guide power availability when you can get so little when the wind does not blow – or blows too strongly so you have to shut the turbines down.

The government needs to concentrate on self sufficiency to keep the lights on and to prevent Mr Putin and an energy short Europe holding us to ransom.