

We need more energy

Several informed people contacted me following my speech on importing electricity in the Commons on Monday.

One wrote:

"I listened to your speech yesterday in the House and I completely agree with point that you made regarding the inter connectors.

I have worked in the industry for 35 years

The inter connectors serve a purpose to balance the European system but each country has its own energy policy and agenda. The U.K. is a dumping ground for other countries for their excess generation.....

I fear that the Interconnectors will used and abused post Brexit negotiations and that the British public will suffer.

The point is that we can manage without the interconnectors if we focus on U.K. home generated power

Furthermore, why we are paying entities to stop importing power and wind farms to curtail their output is beyond comprehension." (I have removed references to his detailed involvement as he wished to remain anonymous).

I also was reminded of work done by the Centre for Policy Studies revealing the dangerous gap opening up in the amount of domestic power available, and the way that was going to be filled by imports. According to CPS research in 2012 the Coalition government estimated imports of 6 terawatt hours of power by 2030. The plan was to build 26GW of new gas plant to replace retiring coal and act as back up for intermittent renewables like wind. Instead we will build under half that. By 2016 the forecast was to import 77 terawatt hours of electricity by 2025, almost one fifth of our needs.

There are many drawbacks to importing so much. I think we need our own resilience with our own supplies that we control for strategic reasons. We also need to watch out for price rises as and when the continent gets round to ending all its coal power and retires much of its nuclear. They could end up short of electricity. In the meantime the Greens should be campaigning against this interconnector power, as it may well be coming from coal or gas generators. It is all very well the UK claiming it is having coal free days, but it may well be importing coal generated power from the continent for days it thinks are coal free.

The interconnector power is given all sorts of advantages, including no carbon floor tax or transmission charges which the UK competitors face.

It is high time we had a new energy policy suitable for us. It should end our dependence on continental imports, especially given continental growing dependence on Russian gas. That is neither green nor wise, leaving us open to

threats of disruption to supply.