

Written Answers from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Regarding Wind

These answers reveal a worry about discussing the magnitude of special payments to renewable generators, and confirms that there are too many days when wind produces little electricity, leaving us dependent on gas, coal and biomass.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (112033):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much was spent on National Grid constraint payments to wind generators in 2022. (112033)

Tabled on: 16 December 2022

Answer:

Graham Stuart:

The National Grid Electricity System Operator publishes data on the costs and volumes of electricity system balancing services monthly. This includes a breakdown of constraint costs by fuel type, including wind farms. The total amount paid to wind generators for 2022 has not yet been finalised. Further detail on wind farm payments paid in October can be found in The National Grid Electricity System Operator's monthly Balancing Services Summary.

The following documents were submitted as part of the answer and are appended to this email:

1. **File name:** Monthly Balancing Services-october-2022.pdf
Description: Monthly Balancing Services Summary 2022/23 October

The answer was submitted on 28 Dec 2022 at 10:24.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (112032):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much has been paid to wind generators in subsidies in 2022. (112032)

Tabled on: 16 December 2022

Answer:

Graham Stuart:

The Government supports wind generators through a number of schemes. Finalised data for total payments made in 2022 are not yet available.

The answer was submitted on 28 Dec 2022 at 10:26.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (112031):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on how many days did wind power provide less than 10 per cent of UK electricity output in 2022. (112031)

Tabled on: 16 December 2022

Answer:

Graham Stuart:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy does not hold daily electricity generation data. However, for the Public Distribution System in Great Britain only, Elexon's figures show that up to 20th December, there were 64 days in 2022 where generation from wind provided less than 10 per cent of total generation. This excludes net imports from interconnectors.

Source: Elexon half-hourly balancing mechanism reports, available at: <https://www2.bmreports.com/bmrs/?q=generation/fueltype>

The answer was submitted on 28 Dec 2022 at 10:28.

[The battle over recession](#)

In the summer I and a few others warned the government and advised the Truss campaign that then economic policy was going to take us into recession. Official forecasts from the budget said otherwise. I argued that we could change policy to seek to offset some of the recessionary forces coming into play. If the Bank with tight money combined with a treasury hiking taxes, and a concurrent inflation squeezing real incomes, there would be a sharp downturn.

Liz Truss centred her campaign around the need to boost the UK growth rate, and to abate the recessionary forces. She was right to do so, and it proved the more popular cause. The establishment she was battling now accept that their policies will lead to a recession, with the Bank forecasting six quarters of misery and slowdown. Despite this they still are keen to put up taxes. As a result they face public borrowing this year 75% higher than their budget forecast, confirming the warnings I gave that this year unlike recent years the OBR borrowing figure would be far too low after periods of

massive overstatement. Borrowing remains most sensitive to whether you get growth or not. Slowing the economy deliberately gives you higher borrowing, not less.

What we can agree on is the UK state needs to do a better job at controlling public spending. I have issued lists of ways of getting spending down a bit, whilst improving both spending and performance levels in key areas like health and education. I see in a recent poll ending spend on HS2 and reducing Overseas Aid are the two most popular ways of getting spending down a bit from the issues raised. There are plenty of other ways. It is imperative that more of these public sector pay disputes are settled with something for something settlements, allowing better pay for smarter working. Above all the government should get on with the changes to help many more people into work. There are still plenty of vacancies and people of working age who could be better off if assisted into work.

Written Answers from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Regarding Oil and Gas

The Department which is meant to be increasing UK gas output to displace imports is still very reluctant to talk about what it and its quangos are doing to make this possible. The cited source shows just 3 new fields coming into production in 2022, Blythe, Elgood and Tolmount. There is no mention of the status of Cambo or Jackdaw. Ministers should require more open reporting and more progress to fill the gaps in our home energy supply. There are several proven fields that need investment and production licences. The more we produce oil and gas at home the more tax revenue we generate, the more transport cost we save, and the less CO₂ that is produced. Ministers accept this case but need to make sure the quangos reflect their policy. The Treasury needs to stop the windfall taxes which threaten future investment and will reduce revenues in the medium term.

The news on nuclear has also been suppressed. We need to know if it is safe to carry on with current plants for longer pending replacement by new nuclear. Over the weekend EDF was talking of two early nuclear closures owing in part to the windfall tax.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (112036):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the gas fields that gained production licences in 2022. (112036)

Tabled on: 16 December 2022

Answer:

Graham Stuart:

While the 33rd UK Offshore Licensing Round opened in October, awards for licences under this round will not be made until next year. Awards under the previous, 32nd licensing round were made in 2020. There have therefore not been any awards for new licences in 2022.

Oil and gas fields, after being licensed, require several consents issued by regulators, such as Development and Production Consents granted by the North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) before they can begin production. Several fields have received these consents in 2022.

A full list of these consents can be found on the NSTA's website:

<https://www.nstauthority.co.uk/data-centre/data-downloads-and-publications/field-data/>.

The answer was submitted on 28 Dec 2022 at 10:12.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (112035):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the amount of coal generating capacity could be made available on stand by notices. (112035)

Tabled on: 16 December 2022

Answer:

Graham Stuart:

Upon agreement between the Electricity System Operator and coal operators, there are 3 coal plants still operating in Great Britain with contingency contracts until March 2023. This totals approximately 2.4GW of capacity which can be called upon if needed for the purposes of security of supply.

The answer was submitted on 28 Dec 2022 at 10:13.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (112034):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has reviewed the planned dates for the closure of nuclear power stations; and whether he has made an assessment of the impact of postponing the closure dates on the safety of those stations. (112034)

Tabled on: 16 December 2022

Answer:

Graham Stuart:

The continued operation of, and any extensions to, operational dates for any UK nuclear power station is a decision for the operator, EDF, and the independent nuclear regulator, the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR), based on safety and commercial considerations. If the ONR has any safety concerns, they will not let the reactor return to service unless and until those concerns have been satisfactorily addressed and may require more regular shutdowns for ongoing review. Operational dates are kept under constant review by EDF and the ONR.

The answer was submitted on 28 Dec 2022 at 10:15.

[A and E and NHS management](#)

Yesterday when senior medics connected to the NHS warned of a crisis in A and E the BBC World at One programme did interview a senior manager from NHS Scotland. He ducked a question about money, implying fault with the SNP government. The BBC did not follow up. When asked for a way of solving the problems he emphasised the need for most patients to use a remote service to keep pressures off surgeries and A and E.

They then interviewed the Strategic Planning Director of NHS England. A good early question about the need for a new strategic plan was not followed through though clearly the current plan is full of difficulties. The Director did not offer a clear way to resolve the problems. He did point out they are working on a manpower plan which should be ready next spring. He was not asked why they currently lack a manpower plan or why it is taking so long to produce one. I and others have been calling for one for many months. You cannot have a proper plan for the NHS without a manpower plan, as people are the main resource and cost in the service.

I remember urging PM, Chancellor and Health Secretary with Boris in office to require a clear plan on recruitment and retention of key skills when the NHS was asking for a large sum of additional cash. They agreed but the NHS did not supply the manpower plan so the cash was given anyway. As the warnings all relate to lack of GP, A and E and bed capacity surely the solution must in part be recruiting and retaining more qualified people. As the population grows so we need more beds, more nurses and doctors and more treatments and operations.

It may well be possible to free more beds by improving social care, but bed numbers are still low by international comparison. Some of us pushed hard for more capacity when covid hit, only to see the Nightingales little used then closed. We also watched as the private sector capacity was not properly used though taxpayers were paying for its availability. Huge extra sums did not buy useful extra capacity. The new strategy should include realistic

manning levels and bed numbers. Why won't the media press the top management on the failure of current plans and ask why capacity is kept too low?

The forces of the establishment

Many write into this blog to complain of policies they think have been foisted on them and the UK by virtue of international treaties, agreements, the views of global institutions and of a governing class of quango heads, senior officials, celebrities, big business and many politicians. The conspiracy theorists wish to attribute these views and policies to a handful of people they think are unduly influential. In practice it is much more complex than that. The truth is many of these bodies, governments and officials do think the same and do wish to impose a similar agenda on the countries or in the sectors they control. There has been a movement to world and to regional or bloc based government. The long campaign to get the UK to join the ill fated Exchange Rate Mechanism was part of this development. It led to boom, bust and the end of the government in the UK. it should warn us about accepting such future strong advice from these international sources.

It means that health policy looks to the World Health Organisation for responses to major public health challenges. Economic policy in recent years has been driven in the USA, UK, EU and Japan by the same mistaken belief that a Central bank can keep interest rates near zero and keep creating extra money without it being inflationary. Pandemic policy was driven by a common view that lockdowns were essential until vaccinations were widespread. Energy and environmental policy has been dominated by a general drive to net zero, leading to too much reliance on unreliable wind and solar electricity and to a shortage of gas. Erratic US policy towards military intervention especially in Afghanistan has accelerated a move to a two bloc world in geopolitics, with a US led group including NATO competing with a Chinese led group.

It is still possible to challenge these views and to follow alternative policies. That is easier in democracies than autocracies, though we have just seen a major change of policy towards covid in China following popular protest against lockdowns. In the USA Republican states take a very different approach to net zero than Democrat ones. Republican states drill for more oil and gas, back the diesel and petrol vehicle industry, and see private vehicles as an important part of personal freedom, whilst Democrat states seek to move swiftly away from fossil fuels in every way possible. Sweden took a different line on covid restrictions than most other European countries. The Central Banks of China and Switzerland did not follow the other leading Central Banks with excessive Quantitative easing and high inflation. Some western countries follow a policy of neutrality rather than being part of the US led NATO framework.

Liz Truss's problems resulted from an establishment that did not want her to

change economic policy. They do not like tax cuts, denying that they can raise more money, and producing pessimistic assessments of their impact on growth. They claim to want to run the economy based around a falling deficit, yet the measures they recommend are about to boost the deficit which rises if you enter recession. Their policies will ensure recession. They resist proposals to improve and alter our regulatory frameworks for business now we are out of the EU, as they favour continued EU harmonisation. I will look at the tussle over economic policy at the heart of the brief Truss period in office in a later blog.