

Brexit wins – a more independent energy policy

During our final years in the EU the Commission was driving hard for a common EU energy policy. The continent is chronically short of energy, with little oil or gas of its own, with an ageing French nuclear fleet of power stations, with Germany pulling out of nuclear power this year, and with a policy of running down coal mining and coal power generation as quickly as possible. The EU has to import 60% of its total energy needs. Renewables now account for just 15% of total energy required, though this sector is growing fast.

The aim of the EU policy is to foster maximum interdependence to justify EU control. They argue that putting in more gas pipelines and electricity interconnectors increases the flexibility of any given EU country as they may be able to import from others when they are short. It also greatly increases the dependence of all the states on imports and forces them to accept EU involvement or leadership in energy policy.

When the UK first joined the EEC they insisted on our substantial fishing grounds being a common resource, opened up for exploitation by many vessels from elsewhere in the Union. This did huge damage to our stocks and our domestic industry. They wanted to make our oil and gas a common resource as well, but the UK did resist that. Instead the UK allowed a range of EEC companies to have access to licences alongside UK and US oil companies, whilst landing most of the oil and gas in the UK and taxing it here.

Today officials and regulators in the UK Energy division of the Business Department seem wedded to the idea of our being linked ever more closely to the continental system by putting in many more interconnectors and pipes to allow more imports. They try to argue that the intention is to have a market to export excess wind power when we have it, but the movement is nearly always the other way with endless imports. Allied to the policy of closing down all but one of our current nuclear stations this decade as they age, and closing down the remaining stand by coal power stations, it seems clear the aim is to increase our import dependence this decade whilst trying to get renewable and new nuclear to catch up with needs sometime in the next decade.

Ministers have recently accepted that we need more gas this decade whilst we await the coming of nuclear and more wind storage systems, and accept that the greener and cheaper option for the UK is to produce more of our own. We should use the opportunity of Brexit to break free from dependence on an energy short EU and should make ourselves self sufficient, with enough reliable energy to keep our lights on at all times. Leaving the common energy policy will be a big win. The EU has to contort its foreign policy to keep the Russian gas flowing. The UK could enjoy a lot more tax revenue if it produced more of its own oil and gas instead of relying on dearer imports where foreign countries got the tax revenue on production.