

China's warning

China has decided to suspend her not very demanding emissions targets as the country needs to keep the lights on. In a major reversal just before COP 26 the world's largest producer of CO2 has had to urge full out production and purchase of coal to generate power. Any idea that the creator of 27% of the world's manmade CO2 was about to reverse the growth in her carbon output has been forced out by the reality that she needs coal to keep the factories turning and the homes heated and functioning. In Germany the CDU is trying to keep coal alive until 2038, with the CDU government in the Rhineland approving new large strip mining activities, owing to the unreliability of wind power on the German system.

Governments keen to decarbonise need to recognise that their prime duty is to keep the lights on and the factories working. It is not a good look to end up with emergency power cuts and the need to dash for coal to avoid disaster. Our very sophisticated societies, hospitals, schools and homes rely completely on electricity to power them or to operate the controls, lighting and communications. It is even more important now to have enough capacity for all conditions and eventualities.

I repeat my request of government that they make putting in more electricity capacity an urgent priority, choosing methods of generation that balance the current mix and provide resilience. I also want to see us produce more domestic gas and biomass materials to cut the costs and fuel use currently taken by importing LNG and wood pellet and to add to our options for power generation.