Energy Self Sufficiency?

Today I publish four answers I have received to energy questions. They reveal a slow and painful transition to a more realistic stance on UK energy capacity and needs. On the positive side the government is now recognising the need to replace the current nuclear capacity it is closing. It had already committed to the expensive Hinkley C which should come on stream this decade and will offset part of the loss of capacity from nuclear plant closures. It now wants to put in Sizewell C which is also likely to be very expensive and is unlikely before sometime in the next decade. It is also working up plans with Rolls Royce on small modular nuclear reactors. These could be in series production in the next decade and could make a useful contribution to capacity. They are currently thought to be considerably cheaper than large nuclear. That still has to be grounded by establishing a scalable prototype.

The government's estimate of how much electricity we will need this decade reveals relatively slow rates of growth after 2025 and practically no growth for the first half of the decade. This may be realistic, but it implies the government does not expect many additions to the electric vehicle fleet or to electric home heating before 2025 and a slow rate of climb thereafter. I would have thought they would want to have more capacity available in advance of the breakthrough in the electrical revolution they urge, to reassure potential users that there will be sufficient power for the explosion in demand they want to engineer.

Their approach on gas has shifted a bit, with more recognition of the importance of gas to our current energy needs, and recognition of it as a transition fuel. I believe Ministers also now see the need to produce more domestic gas instead of burning imported gas. However, this answer still leaves open the probability that the Regulators will weight the need to run down gas more highly than the obvious need at the moment to produce more of it at home. They clearly still want to end the three coal power stations that have kept the lights on at times of little wind this winter, which is worrying. Officials seem wedded to energy insecurity as a policy allied to maximising imports. Ministers need to press harder.

I will continue to press the issues of our vulnerability, both because we rely too much on imports and because their forecasts of growth in demand are so small. We need more domestic capacity.

Question:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of trends in electricity demand in the UK up to 2030. (105322)

Tabled on: 17 January 2022

Answer:
Greg Hands:

The table below shows the Department's latest published projections of total electricity supplied by UK generators from the year 2021 up to 2030, net of storage and imports. Supply is modelled to meet projected demand and takes account of demand trends.

Year	Total electricity supplied (net of storage & imports), TWh (terawatt-hours)
2021	313
2022	313
2023	312
2024	313
2025	315
2026	319
2027	323
2028	328
2029	334
2030	340

These figures are based on central estimates of economic growth, fossil fuel prices and contains all agreed policies where decisions on policy design were sufficiently advanced to allow robust estimates of impact as of August 2019. Further details can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-and-emissions-projections. Figures provided are extracted from *BEIS Energy and Emissions Projections: Net Zero Strategy baseline (partial interim update December 2021) Annex J, Total electricity generation by source.*

The answer was submitted on 25 Jan 2022 at 17:16.

Question:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to grant permits to allow companies to develop new gas and oil fields that have investment plans and proven reserves; and what the timetable is for the granting of those permits. (105318)

Tabled on: 17 January 2022

Answer:
Greg Hands:

The UK offshore oil and gas sector is important; it continues to heat homes, fuel cars and underpin security of supply while the Government grows its renewables sector and develops its low carbon infrastructure. As the Government moves to a low carbon future, the sector needs a managed transition, to avoid losing the employment and expertise which will help us achieve the energy transition.

Before proceeding to consent, proposals for field development are subject to extensive scrutiny by regulators: the Oil and Gas Authority and the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning. The Government does

not comment on individual projects undergoing the regulatory process. Any decisions made by these regulators are published in due course.

The answer was submitted on 25 Jan 2022 at 17:09.

Question:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will ensure that the coal power stations currently used when there is little wind will be kept available until the UK has more reliable domestic generating capacity to cover a shortage of wind energy. (105320)

Tabled on: 17 January 2022

Answer:
Greg Hands:

The Government is committed to phasing out unabated coal generation by October 2024. The Government is confident that the Capacity Market will ensure there is sufficient capacity to offset the retirement of the remaining coal plants. The most recent Capacity Market auctions have already secured the majority of Great Britain's capacity needs out to 2024/25.

National Grid Electricity System Operator has the ability to manage electricity supply and demand, including at times of low wind generation. It can call on a wide range of technology types to do this, including gas, batteries, interconnectors and demand-side response.

The answer was submitted on 25 Jan 2022 at 17:06.

Question:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to make up for the reduction in energy derived from nuclear power in this decade as the current fleet of nuclear stations close. (105321)

Tabled on: 17 January 2022

Answer:
Greg Hands:

This Government is committed to nuclear power in our future diverse energy mix:

- Hinkley Point C will supply 3.2GW of secure, low carbon electricity for around 60 years, meeting around 7% of GB's current electricity requirements. Hinkley has roughly the equivalent output to three of its predecessors.
- The Government are progressing negotiations over Sizewell C in Suffolk.
- Our £385m Advanced Nuclear Fund, the Government have awarded £210m to Rolls-Royce SMR to develop their SMR design and are supporting AMR development.
- The Government also announced a new £120m Nuclear Enabling Fund to provide targeted support to address barriers to entry for future nuclear,

- Later this year the Government will publish a nuclear roadmap setting out the government’s strategy in more detail.
- The Nuclear Energy (Finance) Bill will reduce the obstacles to financing new nuclear projects.

The answer was submitted on 25 Jan 2022 at 17:05.