

Great British Energy- a disastrous idea or a con?

Labour is declining to promise much for fear of letting people down if it wins. Its biggest of just six first steps or pledges is to set up Great British Energy, bringing bills down by £300. There is no way such a body could cut bills.

The lengthy paper that purports to explain the soundbite proposal is long on words but short on detail. Great British Energy would have wide ranging powers and duties. It would directly invest in nuclear, solar and wind, as well as in experimental new technologies for hydrogen and storage.

How would it taking on responsibilities for the build out of Hinkley and Sizewell make any difference to the long time they are taking to complete? How would it accelerate the work already underway to support and then commission a fleet of smaller nuclear reactors? What does Labour and GB Energy know that would enable them to extend the lives of existing nuclear stations due to close. If there is a safe way to do this it should be done by the current managers and safety inspectors.

The only cost/spend number in the paper is a budget of £1 bn a year for local energy projects and Council owned companies. I highlighted yesterday how several of these lost us millions and some went bust. This could be more good money after bad.

The idea Labour could get to all no carbon UK generated power by 2030 is absurd. They admit they need to quadruple the size of the grid, criss crossing our countryside with avenues of pylons. They have hugely ambitious targets for onshore and offshore wind and solar. They say they can add almost 100GW by 2030. There is no way enough projects can be designed and financed by then for such a huge increase. Most current nuclear stations will close by 2030 .

To help force the pace of these investments the state would need to borrow tens of billions of pounds. They may want it to be off balance sheet, but however they do it it will be taxpayers and energy buyers who will pick up the bill. This is all unaffordable, will not happen and will not lower bills.