

How much renewable power does the UK now produce?

The latest quarterly government figures for energy output and use relate to the third quarter of 2021. It is true this was a poor quarter for wind and solar output of electricity, but it is worthwhile looking at what happened as this was an actual outturn after huge investment in renewables. Whilst it was unfortunate that the wind did not blow much and the sun did not shine much, it was also quite a mild period meaning the system was not fully stretched by high demand which would have been met from fossil fuels.

The Business Department Report says "Output from wind, solar and hydro was low due to prevailing weather conditions" . "Unfavourable weather conditions meant that renewable generation fell to 24.3TWh, the lowest value in four years... Wind was particularly affected , down 30% on the same period last year"

The renewables figure they cite for output includes a substantial contribution from biomass or wood pellet. Wind only delivered 15.1% of our total electricity for the quarter, solar 6.2%, with hydro at just 1%. This makes a total of 22.3% from renewables for the whole three month period , under one quarter of our needs. This should put into context the claims of those who say wind is now providing the answer.

All three remaining coal power stations had to be brought into use, with a 155% increase in coal based power on a low base. Overall coal imports rose 18%.

The policy furthered the trend of making us more and more dependent on imports. In the case of coal most is now imported. 48% of the imports came from Russia. Primary oils demand rose by 14% largely met from imports. Domestic gas production was down by 11% also increasing dependence on foreign energy.

In 2021 the UK ran down its stocks of oil following a change in the stockholding protocol in January. The policy of closing gas storage is now being mirrored with the run down of oil stocks, further undermining our energy resilience as a country.

The Business Department needs to turn its attention to replacing more of these imports with UK energy. The National Security Council should be concerned about our growing reliance on the goodwill of foreigners when Europe as a whole is short of energy and when Russia intends to use its dominant positions in gas and coal as part of its diplomatic leverage.