

If gas is dear you need more of it or a better alternative

The Business Secretary was the Energy Minister, and is now the boss of the Energy Minister. His disagreements with the Treasury over whether he can offer any subsidy to hard pressed manufacturers need not prevent him helping the energy using industries very directly. He should invite them in with the gas supply industry and the UK gas producers and discuss how going forward the UK can produce more domestic gas to reduce our reliance on erratic and currently very expensive imported energy.

An industrial user of gas that needs plenty at a competitive price to make steel or glass or paper or ceramics wants some reassurance that going forward they can obtain enough gas at sensible prices to be able to keep their customers. If the government allowed the UK gas industry to find, produce and deliver more of the gas that is available in our islands and seas they could offer more long term contract gas to domestic industry on sensible terms.

The Minister could explain to the green lobby that this is a greener answer as well. It makes little sense to bring gas compressed by use of energy around the world in large tankers needing a lot of diesel to power them to our shores, when local gas could pass down a pipe for a fraction of the power needed for the import. If something is too dear you either need more of it or a substitute. There may be other ways of making steel and paper in due course, but for the time being if we want to save our industries they need cheaper gas.