

Labour's expensive fantasy land for 2030

Labour's plans to phase out all gas and coal power stations by 2030 requires the UK to accelerate its build of wind farms, solar panels, nuclear power, and battery storage. It would also require a big expansion of the grid. They propose a nationalised industry to do much of this work as it would require huge subsidies and managed prices for the power. Claire Coutino is right to highlight the huge cost of some £116 bn of trying to do this and to question the feasibility and wisdom.

It is of course totally unrealistic. Nuclear power will be considerably lower by 2030 following the closures of existing power stations. It is not possible to decide now to put in extra nuclear power stations and have them producing power by 2030. Putting more and more windfarms in as they plan does not solve the problem of keeping the lights on on a windless day. Saying they can put in sufficient storage is more easily stated than delivered. Relying on big batteries would require a colossal programme of building them. Finding enough pump storage locations would not be likely. There is also the small matter of the grid which would need major enhancement against a background of long and complex planning procedures and many local communities wishing to protect their landscape or divert power lines from settlements and important buildings.

We need more affordable and reliable power. Balancing price and security of supply against environmental objectives is a crucial part of success in energy policy. Labour just goes for the environmental without a thought about keeping the lights on, helping business be competitive and controlling people's power bills. Combined cycle gas power still represents some of the cheapest and most reliable power, which is why our system needs what it has and needs some more for the transitional period. whilst nuclear, synthetic fuel, hydrogen and renewables become more affordable and practical propositions for more of our demand.