Questions about the Energy Bill

Yesterday we debated the Energy Bill. This piece of legislation has support from the main Opposition parties and is more to do with the road to net zero than how to have plentiful good value energy for homes and businesses. It proposes additional complex regulations to seek faster movement to a decarbonised future.

It raises a number of questions which I have been posing to Ministers and the wider public in my words on energy. They include

Why does it require a 140% increase in our interconnector capacity to be able to import more energy from the continent? If the aim is energy self sufficiency and more domestic production we should not need that extra spending on connectors.

How will a £20 bn spend on carbon capture and storage be paid for? The Secretary of State says the Uk has storage for £5 trillion of saved carbon costs, but as the saved carbon costs are presumably at least in part UK tax revenues foregone from emissions trading and carbon taxes, it is not obvious to see how the money is raised to purchase the facilities or how the costs of running them are defrayed, other than through other additional tax payments.

What impact will the higher standards for the energy performance of buildings have on the supply of rented accommodation? Isn't there a danger more landlords will decide they cannot afford the extra costs of installation of energy saving measures and will withdraw their properties from the rented market? What will be the rent increase where they do put in the new measures?

The Bill talks about the need for more smart machines and more time switching to ration available electricity. People will not be able to come home from work, put an electric car on charge and turn on a series of home appliances all at the same time but will need persuading or requiring to run some machines and rechargers overnight when there is less electricity demand. What will the likely balance be between discounted night rates, penalty day rates and cut outs or bans on smart machine use and via smart meters?

The Bill perpetuates a complex system of managed prices, price controls, bidding competitions for rights to supply, windfall taxes, company subsidies and government interventions to try to ensure sufficient power. What impact does this wide ranging and frequently changing set of interventions have on private sector willingness to invest in future energy provision?

The government says it wants nuclear to play an important part of reliable domestic electricity supply, yet on current plans nuclear output reduces substantially this decade with various closures and only one opening of a new station. When will firm orders be placed for small nuclear installations?

Why is grid expansion proposed at only a doubling when if most people had electric cars and heat pumps and industry had gone largely electric we would

need considerably more capacity than that?