

What does national resilience look like?

The government now says it does wish the UK to be more self reliant. One obvious area to start with is energy, the centre of the current cost of living and international crisis.

The government wishes to move to a net zero future. They need to understand that for the next few years most people will need gas for their home heating boilers, most energy using industry will still need gas for ceramics and steel, bricks and cement. Most cars, trucks and vans will still need petrol or diesel. The electric revolution will be more widespread next decade, not this.

That is why the UK government now needs to call in the oil and gas industry in the UK and encourage it to fill the gap of the next few years with more UK produced gas and oil. The Business Secretary implied he would do so. So when will he make the announcements that policy needs? We do not need more studies or White Papers. The need is urgent. He and his officials need to give licences to explore and to produce more from all the known deposits and fields. The Treasury needs to consider if the tax regime is sending the right signals, as it will be a big winner from more domestic production. Producing UK oil and gas already incurs Corporation tax at double the standard rate.

For its wider goal of decarbonising the government needs to make more rapid progress with small nuclear reactors, to conclude if this is feasible and economic and if so pump prime a development and production programme to make them a next decade reality. It needs to see which combination of technologies could back its extension of windfarms so that they can keep the lights on when the wind does not blow or blows too much. They need to decide on the balance of green hydrogen production, battery storage and pump storage as the main means of storing wind energy when it is available and using it when the wind is on strike. Affordability matters when they make their choices. You cannot rely on more wind farms alone as there are too many hours when there is no wind or when you have to switch off the turbines because the wind is too strong. All the energy they produce on windy nights needs to be stored for use on calm days.