

Why we need more gas

Many people argue that instead of producing more of our own gas to cover some of the energy shortfall we need to press boldly on with more windfarms. They argue that now wind energy is cheaper than current gas prices, so it makes economic sense as well as environmental.

If only it were that simple. Many have pointed out that the problem with wind energy is it stops when the wind does not blow. It does not matter how many windfarms with how much rated capacity you install if the wind does not blow. Wind turbines also cannot function in very high winds. But there is an obvious more practical problem for those who say the answer lies in a blowing wind. Most UK households this winter will heat their rooms and water using gas. Renewable electricity would be no use to them. Most industrial processes use gas rather than electricity. Most commercial premises are fuelled by gas.

Until most households, most factories and most offices have been through their own electric revolution we will need more gas as electricity cannot power it. The issue is do we produce the gas ourselves, with greater reliability and tax revenues flowing to the UK state, or do we import it with tax revenues and jobs flowing to the overseas provider? Is there going to be a hydrogen revolution, where it becomes commercial to use windpower to create large quantities of hydrogen which can be used to fire our boilers? If so that does not solve the problem for the next few years whilst this is planned and installed.

In all the grand green plans gas is down there as a transition fuel. In all the plans there is an acknowledgement that the world as whole will be using more oil and gas at the end of this decade than it did at the beginning. It will be more reliable, collect more tax revenue generate more jobs and vent less CO₂ if we use our own rather than rely on imports.