A Vision for Energy

The Workers' Party of Britain believes that tackling climate change and ensuring security of supply of energy are inseparable; using low carbon technology will be the driver for achieving these inseparable aims. To achieve this Britain requires a balanced energy mix that adopts all forms of generation, using all current and future technologies.

Producing our own energy resources will go a long way in achieving sovereignty over the development of our country. In fact it is fundamental to doing so, which is why capitalism has destroyed coal mining, siphoned away oil and put gas and other utilities into the hands of the international market and foreign ownership.

Britain's demand for energy has grown steadily by 1-2% per year and while the current recession has dampened this growth, demand will return, once the economy returns to some form of stability, consequently generating capacity needs to expand. The challenge ahead is significant, Britain requires £200B in investment to renew the nations aging power plant, distribution networks and to install the future technology of smart metering. This is set against a background where Britain has not built a nuclear power station for 15 years and a coal fired station for 40.

a robust and flexible energy solution

The solutions need to be robust and flexible to accommodate fluctuating changes in demand. A combination of energy sources will be the most reliable and efficient method of achieving this aim. For example coal and nuclear run most economically at high load factors, supplying the demand for "base load" electricity. Renewable sources, although often intermittent, provide CO2 free electricity whilst Combined Cycle Gas Turbines provide rapid reaction capacity to supplement electricity supply, especially as a backup to intermittent renewables.

Nuclear power stations are virtually free of carbon emissions so building sufficient reactors to produce 25% of our energy requirements would provide a valuable contribution towards achieving targets to reduce climate change. However to undertake such a construction programme will need a significant investment in skills and manufacturing capacity.

Nuclear power should not be seen as an alternative to renewable or any other form of energy. Rather, nuclear power is a vital component for base load production and an integral component in achieving security of supply and energy independence and despite Fukushima the case is as strong as ever for the investment in a new nuclear fleet.

Although nuclear power stations have relatively high capital costs, this is offset by low operating costs and efficient running in supplying base load. Therefore we would implement the process of constructing a series of nuclear power stations to address the shortfall in Britain's future energy needs and as a tool to address the consequences of climate change. We would equally seek further investment into alternative energy sources to create a truly mixed system.

We recognise of course that there is a radioactive legacy. This clearly needs to be addressed irrespective of any new nuclear build. The Workers Party of Britain accepts that the recommendations of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management provide a clear and unequivocal blueprint for establishing a platform for dealing with radioactive waste. Solutions are already technically feasible and a waste management facility should be built as soon as possible to reduce the burden of future generations.

Thatcher's neo-conservative onslaught on the mining industry during the 1980s, has forced Britain, once self sufficient in coal, to become the largest coal importer within Europe and this trend is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

As a result, if Britain has now to wrench its energy industry from foreign control and threats, it must first secure its indigenous coal from capitalist control. The use of coal for providing energy has been used for generations, far from an old outdated technology; coal is a fuel source for the future. The use of available and future technologies will enable coal to be a 21st Century source of fuel that will safeguard supplies and assist in the fight against carbon emissions.

Supercritical boilers and Pressurised Fluidised Bed Combustion are both technologies that are available today and can be either fitted to existing coal stations or be the basis of new build. Carbon Capture is also a technology that is used in some form today and is being further developed as a technology for the future.

The lead Britain had in coal technology has now been lost. The mining base in Britain is minute compared to that of the last century. Dedicated mining engineering companies have disappeared and the skills built up craft workers are no longer available. However, all is not lost, as if the will to do so is strong, we can rebuild our mining industry and secure the energy for the future.

A number of those mines closed during the 1980's and 1990's could be re-opened. Open cast mining would need to be considered in some cases, which is preferable to transporting coal half way around the world, which can be an unreliable source and further contributes to global warming.

As with nuclear power, coal fired power stations run most economically at high load factors, supplying the demand for "base load" electricity. Without base load none of our homes, hospitals, or work places would be able to function as they do today.

If Britain is to use coal as a source for energy for the future then sufficient financial investments need to be implemented today. Research and Development in technologies and training for workers are all priorities.

If Britain is to achieve security of supply and to make a credible contribution to tacking carbon emissions then we need to ensure that these priorities are addressed today to enable us all to move forward for tomorrow.

investment in energy

The "market" has failed to invest sufficiently to maintain the technology, effectiveness, and skill base of Britain's energy industry. The policy of privatisation implemented in the 1990's and maintained by all governments since has failed the nation. It has produced ever increasing fuel prices, forcing more and more of Britons, young and old into fuel poverty. Attacks on the terms, conditions, and skills of energy workers, whilst the owners make ever higher profits have typified the industry.

Energy companies will not invest sufficient resources in the industry and will certainly not be prepared to fund the £200B, therefore the answer has to be that the whole sector has to be brought back in to public ownership.

The scale of the investment required to rebuild the nation's energy infrastructure towers over any other investment project. This huge investment, if directed correctly, could be turned into a programme to spearhead the economy of Britain. High skilled jobs, in construction and in running the industry would be created, providing employment for years for many workers in Britain. It is currently estimated that due to the inefficiency of capitalism, 72% of employers within the energy sector are experiencing skill shortages. This undermines the ability of Britain to be self-sufficient in energy needs. We will put into place training programmes to develop

the existing skills of workers within the industry and to produce skilled workers in all disciplines now and for the future.

The Workers' Party of Britain has as its basis for its energy policy

- Security of supply
- Reductions in carbon emissions.
- A balanced energy mix that exploits all forms of generation.
- The ending of fuel poverty
- Investment in British Jobs

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