ENERGY REVIEW SUBMISSION

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Background.

In 2001 meetings were held in spring and summer in London attended by representatives from BNIF, academic institutions, media personalities, public relations organisations, meteorological offices, parliament and educational establishments. These events were held to discuss the main issues for professionals in influential positions in relation to nuclear power and other sources of energy for the UK.

The attendees were all selected because of their current and previous activities, their science backgrounds and their concern for the environment. In addition a majority of the groups were significantly below 40 in age and therefore represent the views of those who will be alive in 2040 and beyond.

The event was informal and subject to Chatham House Rules to ensure no issues were unfairly treated.

The following points highlight just some of the key themes which dominated the evening discussions and, although there was not unanimous agreement on the following there was a strong tide of consensus on many topics.

The announced energy review is seen as a welcome and timely opportunity to plan a safe and sustainable future for the UK in the light of light of climate change effects and the predominance of gas in Europe and the age of the Nuclear power station portfolio in the UK.

The main topics of concern for the group were climate change, security of supply and nuclear waste management.

Security of Supply

The majority of the group agreed that as the UK 's reliance on imported gas from Europe and Russia increases there will be a commensurate decrease in security of supply. A good way to increase security is to be self sufficient in energy and as fossil fuel reserves deplete in the UK the only other natural resources are renewables. Investment in renewables coupled with a fresh look at Nuclear power would seem to be the obvious way forward in the short to medium term. The debate on Nuclear energy and the associated waste disposal problem seems to be driven more by emotion than reasoned debate and the group were keen to have a completely open and public study on waste management and storage. This is essential to gain widespread endorsement of any adopted policy and sites.

Markets

The predictions for the decline of oil are highly variable but it is evident that production is likely to fall in the near future. This reliance on the rest of Europe for our gas and other fuels is seen as cause for concern especially in view of the UK's conversion to gas for primary power generation. The reliance on Russia and other more volatile economies for fuel at a stable price is viewed as risky. A market based approach to energy provision has worked to date but the group were not convinced that prices could be controlled by buyers in a buyers market.

Current Energy Policy

There was a perception by many in the group that current energy policy does not exhibit a consistent and "joined up" approach. The problems in California and Brazil were discussed and the lack of direction and policy in the UK and a faith in market forces could be taking us along a similar path.

The group agreed that any energy policy needs to have short, medium, and long, term aspects to it and, although renewables are an obvious long term candidate, in the short to medium term a balance of fossil fuel, nuclear and renewables must be maintained since the possible contribution to the energy portfolio from renewables is widely reported to be of the order of 5 to 10 percent between now and 2010.

The obvious flaws in basic arithmetic when comparing conventional and nuclear power station capacities with that of wind turbines and solar energy only breeds skepticism amongst concerned parties.

As an example the current policy for phasing out the nuclear power plants with no direct one for one replacement with a zero carbon emitting alternative which is required to simply stand still in the emissions race is exasperating. The statement that renewables can bridge this 20+% gap is inconceivable given current technologies, and some basic sums.

The Environment

The debate on tradeoffs and interactions between the environmental aspects of renewables, nuclear power, greenhouse gases, global warming, fossil fuels, and hydrogen based technologies highlights the proliferation of misinformation on the above. The quality and accuracy of the information in the public domain, and in particular that presented through the media was judged to be dangerously inaccurate and biased.

The predictions, although widely varying, that the average temperature is rising steadily and will have risen by, up to, 5 deg C by the end of the century are deeply worrying. The current policies of the Renewable Obligation, Climate Change Levy need to be reinforced, or replaced, with a carbon based tax which would directly impact the production of carbon based emissions.