



5th September 2001

I welcome the government's long term policy review of energy supply in the UK and am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this. I have looked at the scoping policy sections of your website and generally you present a balanced case. I am somewhat concerned though, that recent government statements appear to indicate a return to old and discredited nuclear technology, and do not appear to be giving sufficient regard to the emerging renewable technologies.

There are a number of fundamental problems with nuclear power, that in spite of a relatively long operational history, have still not been resolved. First and foremost of these has to be the issue of the safe disposal of nuclear waste - the industry is stockpiling massive amounts of highly dangerous fissile materials and there is still no consensus as to how best this material can be maintained in a safe condition during the many hundreds of years of its natural decay. Secondly, nuclear power stations are responsible for large volumes of waste being discharged to both air and sea which is increasingly unacceptable both nationally and internationally. A safe method for decommissioning nuclear power stations once their commercial life is over has yet to be developed, as a result of which we are currently operating a number of aged Magnox stations long beyond their original planned closure date. The economics of nuclear power have long been suspect, and the technology has only been viable by dint of public subsidy through the Non Fossil Fuel Levy and by ignoring the costs of decommissioning and of the disposal or long term storage of nuclear waste. Finally, there is always the possibility of catastrophic process failure, and more than twenty years experience in industry has taught me that there is no safety system in the world that can guard against the ever present risk of operator error.

By contrast, the emerging renewable energy technologies have enormous potential to supply quite quickly a large proportion of the UK's power requirement, without any of the problems of long term pollution or risk of devastating accident. Denmark have surged ahead of us in developing wind turbine technology, even though the UK has arguably the greatest wind resource in Europe. Wave energy has hardly been developed, but again the UK has more than its fair share of offshore wave power, and with the right support for research and development could well become the world leader in this technology. Photovoltaics are a well proven technology, and once again a UK company, BP plc, has been a leader in the field but is now being overtaken by Japanese competitors. Bio-mass is yet another perfectly viable option, as demonstrated by the recently commissioned plant at Eggborough, with huge potential for further development, and with the added bonus of associated regeneration in the agricultural industry. Similarly bio-diesel is readily available in parts of Europe but almost unknown in the UK. While some of these technologies may not yet be cost effective when compared with conventional power generation, costs are

reducing all the time and they will undoubtedly be competitive in the foreseeable future.

In conclusion, I believe that in searching for an alternative to fossil fuels, the government should give every possible encouragement to developing clean, sustainable technologies. Renewable energy sources could easily provide a very large proportion of the UK's energy requirements within a relatively short timescale. The nuclear industry should concentrate on developing acceptable methods for dealing with the waste already generated and the decommissioning of existing plants, and there should be no question of any more nuclear power stations being built until these issues are fully resolved.

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward my views on this matter.

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