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Energy policy damage which new UK Energy White Paper must urgently address

Opening Comment by Lord Howell of Guildford at Westminster Energy and Environment Forum Conference on Energy Markets Reform at Caledonian Club at 9.15 Thursday 6th February. (Lord Howell is Chair of the Windsor Energy Group, Chair of Advisors to Crystol Energy- and former UK Secretary of State for Energy).

1. Central targets of both White Paper and Glasgow COP must be clear – to reconcile zero net emissions and need to combat global climate change with lowest cost and fully reliable electricity and gas supplies.
2. The low cost aim is both failing and hurting. Household energy bills are up 40 percent in five years. £190 surcharge on every family. Poorest hit hardest. There are reports that benefits are delayed by months while home consumers have to pay up now. Result- borrowing from loan sharks to stay warm and cook.
This is totally unacceptable. No wonder consumers feel sore when world oil and gas prices are low and falling.
3. The UK may be showing ‘climate leadership’ but is anyone following? Need to explain how our ‘example’ is really working. Greening Britain is a commendable ambition, but should not resource priority be on technology to assist real big emitters and developing countries which must have cheap energy to survive?
- 4 Global emissions climbing fast. Said to be at least 200 new coal fired stations being planned or built (in India, Pakistan, and Africa – many by the Chinese). How are UK green policies going to check that? No wonder Greta Thurnberg speaks of generation betrayal. But the betrayers may be different from the ones she thinks.

Meanwhile UK power supply prospects are being endangered. There is deep uncertainty for new capacity investors. Nuclear replacement programme is faltering – without which emissions targets will be impossible. Interconnector projects are delayed. Coal stations which could have been converted to bio arbitrarily closed. Differing regional problems overlooked by national and central planners.

A whole mass of energy issues to be straightened out. We live in hopes.
