

UK Energy Strategies Richard Harrington MP

**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department for
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategies
Summary of Statements as Energy Minister
June 2017 – September 2017**

FOSSIL FUELS

Gas Storage Facilities

27 June 2017: During debates in the Commons Mr Harrington was asked by Labour/Co-op MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central Gareth Snell about the future investment required in the UK's gas storage facilities. The Energy Minister responded that there has been significant investment in natural gas supply infrastructure over the past decade. Mr Harrington argued that market-led investment will continue to deliver secure gas supplies but that the Government will monitor. The UK has diverse and flexible sources of natural gas – indigenous production from the North sea; six international gas pipelines with Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands; three LNG terminals that can bring supply from anywhere in the world; and a number of modern responsible gas storage facilities. Mr Harrington argued that the closure of Rough gas storage facility would not cause a problem, citing analysis conducted by National Grid and others.

Offshore Industry – North Sea

20 July 2017: SNP MP for Linlithgow and East Falkirk Martyn Day asked the Energy Minister about Government's support for the decommissioning of the North Sea oil and gas industry. Mr Harrington responded that 12% of installations and pipelines in the UK Continental Shelf have been decommissioned to date (July 2017). This is expected to increase over the next decade, an activity that the Government is committed to supporting. BEIS is working with the Oil and Gas Authority to help build capacity in the supply chain through greater visibility of forthcoming programmes so that suppliers can prepare. The Government also supported the establishment of the Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC) as part of the Aberdeen City Region Deal. The OGTC is working with industry to develop new technology to aide the decommissioning process.

Shale Gas – Insolvency

13 September 2017: Sir Greg Knight asked BEIS what provisions and safeguards it has been made to ensure the decommissioning or maintenance of insolvent shale gas wells are the responsibility of the companies and not the taxpayers, locally or nationally. Mr Harrington responded that the Government has a regulatory framework in place for the decommissioning of wells. The Oil and Gas Authority assesses companies' financial adequacy during the petroleum licensing process prior to awarding the licence. HSE specialist inspectors also review shale gas operators' plans including design, construction and decommissioning. The Offshore Installations and Wells Regulation 1996 requires all oil and gas wells to be abandoned in such a way that there can be no escape of fluids from the well or associated reservoir.

Coal – Mining

12 September 2017: Shipley MP Philip Davies asked BEIS what the Government's policy on coal mining in the UK is. Mr Harrington responded that the Government is committed to ensuring the supply of secure, affordable and clean energy for businesses and households. In 2002 coal production was approx. 30m tonnes compared with 4.2m tonnes in 2016. An additional £1.8bn from the Local Growth Fund has been allocated for a new set of Growth Deals between Government and Local Enterprise Partnerships; £23bn has been invested in the National Productivity Investment Fund to drive productivity; and a new £300m Skills Fund to skill-up workers has been set up.

Electricity Interconnectors

4 July 2017: Conservative MP for Stone Sir William Cash asked the Energy Minister about the operational interconnectors and their capacity. Mr Harrington responded that the UK currently has 4GW of operational interconnector power, including:

1. IFA (Interconnexion France-Angleterre); 2GW (2,000MW) from Folkestone, Kent to Calais, France, operating since 1986;
2. Moyle; 500MW between South Ayrshire, Scotland and County Antrim, Northern Ireland, operating since 2002;
3. Britned; 1GW (1,000MW) from the Isle of Grain, Kent, to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, operating since 2011;
4. East-West (EWIC); 500MW connecting Barkby Beach, North Wales to Dublin, Ireland, operating since 2012.

CLEAN ENERGY

Nuclear – Euratom Membership

12 July 2017: During oral questions on the UK's Euratom membership Mr Harrington said that, although the UK is leaving Euratom, the Government is committed to a constructive and collaborative relationship with Euratom. The Energy Minister went on to say that the UK will apply international standards on nuclear safeguards to ensure that the highest standards of nuclear safety are delivered. Mr Harrington also stated that leaving Euratom will not have any adverse effects on the supply of medical radioisotopes as they are not part of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty but part of Euratom which places no restriction on the export of medical isotopes outside Europe. The Energy Minister stated that the Government's aim is to maintain our mutually successful civil nuclear cooperation with Euratom. Government will establish a nuclear safeguards regime through the Office for Nuclear Regulation. Mr Harrington also claimed that there is clear mutual interest in maintaining close and effective co-operation with the EU. Government is also preparing the domestic Nuclear Safeguards Bill and talking to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Nuclear – Small Modular Reactors

18 July 2017: Clwyd West MP David Jones asked the Energy Minister what assessment BEIS had made of the potential for small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs). The Energy Minister responded that the Government had commissioned a Techno Economic Assessment of SMRs, the results of which would be published in the autumn.

Solar – Redundancy

13 September 2017: Hornsey and Wood Green MP Catherine West asked the Energy Minister what estimate BEIS had made of the number of job losses in the UK solar sector since April 2015. Mr Harrington responded that the UK's Solar PV industry was a success and had seen rapid development over the last 5 years. He added that the Government was however looking to move towards a subsidy-free solar deployment and industry was responding based on the revised Feed-in-Tariff scheme. The minister claimed it was too early to see the impact of the revised scheme – however there had already been 160MW of solar deployment under the revised scheme. Mr Harrington also claimed that Government expected further deployment as costs continue to fall.

Carbon Capture and Storage

29 June 2017: Responding to an oral question posed by Alex Cunningham MP for Stockton North, Mr Harrington set out the Government's view on CCS. Mr Harrington stated that CCS has a potential role in long-term decarbonisation of the UK's economy but costs must come down. Government would take a new position following *Lowest Cost Decarbonisation for the UK: the critical role of CCS*, published by the Parliamentary Advisory Group on CCS.

Merits of a locally-based network of energy efficiency centres

5 September 2017: The Energy Minister was asked by Wirral West MP Margaret Greenwood about locally-based networks of energy efficiency centres. Mr Harrington responded that local communities, businesses and authorities have a significant role in raising awareness for renewable energy and energy efficiency. BEIS provides the Energy Savings Advice Services in England and Wales. Since 2014, Government had committed over £16m to support community energy through schemes such as the Rural Community Energy Fund and Renewables Heat Incentive and Feed-in Tariff scheme.

Electricity Generation

12 September 2017: Shipley MP Philip Davies asked about the UK becoming self-sufficient in electricity production after March 2019. Mr Harrington responded that the Government's priority was to maintain affordable, clean and secure energy supplies for businesses and households. Part of the UK's Industrial Strategy includes interconnectors. The Energy Minister added that the UK's capacity market ensured security of electricity supply through the right incentives.