



Britain 'needs more gas power'

Posted by [Chris Vernon](#) on April 16, 2006 - 5:22pm in [The Oil Drum: Europe](#)

Topic: [Supply/Production](#)

Tags: [electricity](#), [gas](#), [united kingdom](#) [[list all tags](#)]

The title is not my own but rather the title of a news story published on the BBC News website this morning (Sun 16th Apr06).

The article reported on [The Commons Environmental Audit Committee](#) report about the UK energy gap and included this line:

"Its chairman, Conservative MP Tim Yeo, says 'more gas fired power stations will be needed by 2016 to keep the lights on,' according to the BBC's political correspondent Mike Sanders.

Updated with full text of BBC article below.

27/04/2006: Updated with BBC response to complaint.

In my opinion this is clutching at straws. They've looked at the situation, seen some nuclear is being decommissioned, seen some coal is being decommissioned and seen that renewables aren't going to be able to offset that loss by 2016.

Since failure to meet forecast demand is **absolutely not an option** in their eyes the logical response is to call for more of the one thing that hasn't been ruled out by their initial analysis, more gas power.

Unfortunately had they extended their analysis beyond our shores and actually considered the situation in the *rest of the world* they would realise that dramatically increasing gas consumption as North Sea gas declines is just as impossible as relying on new nuclear by 2016, coal or renewables.

This complete analysis would lead to the radical conclusion that forecast demand won't be met - so instead of Yeo wasting his time calling for more gas power stations he should be trying to work out how electricity demand can be reduced by (say) one third over the next 10 years with minimal hardship. The sooner that option is brought onto the table the sooner we can start to have the sensible debate about how to reduce electricity demand by a third - an achievable target over a decade. We just have to recognise the need and get on with the project.

That was the where I was going to end this article but something far more sinister than an MP's incomplete analysis is afoot.

The article I mentioned earlier was published at this URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4913296.stm

With the title: **Britain 'needs more gas power'**

Checking back again this evening the story has changed. The story at the same URL now has the

A Google news search still shows (Sunday evening 10pm) the original article but the link takes you to the new article.



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The new article no longer has any comment from Yeo but instead carries a strong rebuttal of The Commons Environmental Audit Committee report from none other than Malcolm Wicks the energy minister. He has even been on TV and radio today doing nothing but suggesting everything is in hand. Easter Sunday seems a strange day to be so busy on TV and radio without actually having anything original to say.

It seems to me that Malcolm Wicks didn't like what the BBC had published and has managed to have the story rewritten with a completely difference emphasis. This level of government influence at the BBC is very worrying - it seems that government is actively covering up reporting of future energy problems. This does not bode well for the future.

This story from [Bloomberg](#) and this one from the [Telegraph](#) are better than the current BBC article.

Update Mon 17th Apr06

I've found a copy of the original BBC article. This image compares the three side by side so you can see the Wicks influence. Same article and the same URL, but a different title, picture, caption and in my opinion a very different emphasis.

Highlighted in yellow are the bits of the original that still appear in the rewritten version.

The image shows the evolution of the article through three versions:



Click to enlarge

27/04/2006 Update

After a gentle reminder the BBC have now responded to our complaint:

Dear Sir/Madam

The BBC would like to make clear that this story was not altered in response to any government pressure. It is quite normal for high profile stories on the website to be amended, sometimes several times, as the day and story develop. In other words, it is not uncommon for a story to start the day as 'Report condemns A over major issue..... ' and then for another version later in the day to begin 'A dismisses claims over major issue....' Perhaps the most direct comparison with our coverage on the website is with radio news bulletins, where if you listen for a period of several hours you may well hear the same story reported from several different angles.

Of course we make every effort to ensure that each story we write, however different the news angle at the top may be, is suitably balanced and fair. We believe that to be the case in our coverage of this story.

Thank you for your email and kind regards.

BBC News Website

Make of that what you will.



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