

Zero impact on net zero targets

LAST week your correspondent Mr Ward doubled down on his belief in renewable energy with a proposal to massively increase wind and solar capacity.

As part of the scheme he anticipates making lucrative sales of our surplus energy to "our European neighbours" and buying electricity from Morocco to reduce our reliance on standby gas generation.

The flaw in his argument is that renewable generation will continue to be unreliable, wasteful and expensive.

When we have oversupply our neighbours also tend to be well supplied and conversely when we are struggling due to lack of wind and sun they are also stretched.

The EU will look after its interests first and we could face massive charges for the electricity they can spare us to keep our grid online. The EU is currently receiving about £250 million a month for electricity supplied through the interconnector cables.

Any increase in the wind and solar capacity he proposes will have to be matched by increases in gas generated back-up. Is it realistic to reduce this dependence by importing from Morocco? The latest cost was likely to be in excess of £25 billion so will it be an affordable supply.

The main consideration should be energy security. At present we import around 20 per cent of our demand from the EU and taking extra electricity over thousands of miles of vulnerable cable could raise that figure to a third of our supply. What could possibly go wrong?

Our precipitous net zero commitment has left us with an energy supply which is unreliable and hugely expensive. Judged by outcomes, net zero is a hugely damaging target.

Our actions will have zero impact on climate and our expensive energy is causing rapid national economic decline and increasing poverty. No other country will follow our lead..

On November 29 I received an email from the National Grid asking: "Are you power cut prepared?" Is there any more to be said?

Tony Martin
South Molton

Home discomfort

PROPERTYMARK welcomes the Prime Minister's focus on building new homes but there are concerns that they may miss this target by 2029.

The government would have to build the equivalent of over 1,000 new homes a day to hit this target, which is the size of a typical housing estate each and every day between here and 2029.

The government must ensure that they have the workforce and skills in place to meet such an ambitious aim, because without a sufficient supply of homes, prices are unlikely to stabilise and people may find it a chal-

You're fired!



A fire-eater entertains an appreciative audience at the Bideford Christmas lights switch-on. Picture: Graham Hobbs

lenge to take their first step onto the housing ladder.

Nathan Emerson
Chief executive, Propertymark

Poor policies

WE welcome the Prime Minister's pledge to raise living standards for every part of the UK, but we are concerned that the almost two million older people living in poverty right now have not been considered in the six milestones put forward.

If the government is serious about raising living standards across the country, it must introduce both short term and long term policies

that help lift older people out of financial hardship.

Time is running out, but it is still not too late to reconsider the changes to the winter fuel payment. Linking it to pension credit was misguided and will see far too many older people fall through the cracks. The government's own modelling showed it could increase pensioner poverty by 100,000. Our helpline has been inundated with calls from frightened older people that are already making drastic cutbacks such as eating less and only heating one room. This shouldn't be happening.

In the long-term, the government must ensure financial security for all people in later life. In the future we hope to see the introduction of national social tariffs for water and energy.

This will help protect people on low incomes from future spikes in costs. It is also time for a cross-party consensus on what an adequate income in later life should be to avoid financial hardship. Once this is established, robust plans can be put in place to roll this out to every older person.

Amy Dodge
Independent Age

Food for thought

DEVON County Council has apparently failed to meet its emissions target.

This wouldn't have been helped by the number of Devon Highways staff I have seen recently sitting in their trucks eating their sandwiches with the truck engine running.

They obviously haven't got the message, "Every little helps!"

Tim Gibbs
Bideford

Pedestrian appeal

IF your correspondent Brenda Dyer holds a blue badge permit, she'll be able to park in disabled bays following full pedestrianisation of Barnstaple High Street; if not, details of how she can apply for one can be found online www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking/blue-badge-parking/ (North Devon Gazette Letters, November 6).

Ms Dyer is doubtless aware of the desirability to reduce vehicular traffic along North Devon's historic shopping street in its commercial and hospitality hub, not only for social and environmental - cleaner air, safer street - but also economic reasons?

As a recent report from UK charity Living Streets confirms, people on foot spend more money than those arriving by car, while pedestrianised town centres have higher sales (see the website www.forbes.com/sites/carltonreid/2024/11/13/people-walking-spend-more-in-uk-shops-than-motorists-finds-pedestrian-pound-research/).

The 'pedestrian pound' is a thing...

I doubt your correspondent objects to an economically thriving Barnstaple, so it would regrettable if her request for 'short walks' were to overshadow the benefits full pedestrianisation would bring to the town.

While Ms Dyer's needs can be accommodated as outlined above, the wellbeing of pedestrians, particularly the most vulnerable - toddlers, babies in buggies, the elderly - can only be improved through the exclusion of vehicular traffic.

I visited Barnstaple over the October half-term and experienced first-hand the risk those on foot face as the 4pm-end to High Street's partial pedestrianisation suddenly gives way to vehicular traffic, with those on foot forced back onto narrow pavements.

Instead of seeing one demographic group being pitted against another, an historic High Street fit for all must surely be the desirable outcome for an improved Barnstaple town centre?

Footnote: I note no address was given below Ms Dyer's letter.

Meg Howarth
London