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The history of Britain's relationship with nuclear energy is characterised best by the words of Jerome Kern's classic song "she didn't say yes, she didn't say no; she didn't say stay, she didn't say go". Previous governments have been guilty of disjointed policy making, vacillation and procrastination. For more than a decade investment into our energy infrastructure has been seriously lacking, most blatantly by the last government's refusal to back any nuclear programme.

As a consequence, Ofgem's Chief Executive was obliged to warn last month that "keeping Britain's lights on will come at a price" with a combination of UK power plants closing, foreign gas supplies shrinking, and energy demand rising, our energy reserves are "uncomfortably tight."

Nuclear, a crucial component in tackling the energy trilemma of cheap, clean and secure supply, again finds itself at critical crossroad between government decision making and investor confidence. It is important that this government sends the investor community the clearest signal that it will grow the sector as a component of our energy mix. Given the recent news that Centrica will not participate in the new build programme, maintaining the momentum behind Hinckley C and Sizewell is even more essential.

For its part, the nuclear industry must not hide its light under a bushel. It must reach out to popular opinion to kill off any lingering myth that nuclear is expensive compared to other sources and poses health and safety risks. The facts that nuclear is clean and consistent, is the second cheapest electricity generator after hydro power, and that nuclear power stations are safer to visitors than coal mines must be printed on the public mind.

In terms of security, we source our uranium from the world's most benign powers (contrast that with the instability of the biggest oil producing regions) whilst we store tonnes of plutonium worth billions at Sellafield. From a security angle, nuclear is a no brainer and investors, in their dealings with any government, should not be shy about saying so.

Looking more widely at the UK energy mix, diversity is absolutely vital to delivering secure, affordable and low carbon energy reducing our exposure to international hydrocarbon prices. The reforms introduced in the Energy Bill seek to encourage competition, instill greater confidence and balance our energy mix.

Of course, renewables are essential to meeting our carbon obligations and they present an opportunity for us to become a technology world leader. The problem is that on-shore wind specifically does not deliver either of these. The technology is foreign owned whilst wind is intermittent and must be backed up by conventional gas fired stations when the air is still. That duplicates supply and generates more CO<sub>2</sub>, especially as gas stations are at their most inefficient when being dialled up or down in response to the vagaries of the elements.

And then there is shale gas. With trillions of cubic feet of the stuff beneath our feet, we might have enough to provide 10% of the UK's gas needs for the next 100 years.

At Westminster it is important that industry voices speak loudly and clearly to all political parties that no one should be afraid of nuclear. Every MP should be invited to visit a nuclear facility, talk to the staff and meet with local communities. Nuclear power and nuclear weapons which those opposed to nuclear energy have cleverly though wrongly tangled together should be clearly separated. The UK should be pro nuclear. It should be proud of nuclear, and it should develop the most attractive regulatory and financial regime to attract nuclear skills and nuclear investment to our shores.