

NO GRIT FOR THE OYSTER

No war plan ever survived the first hour of battle, according to Clausewitz. So where was he when you needed him?

The current situation serves to demonstrate how weak our politicians are at handling complex and overlapping issues. To which can now be added problems with forecasting.

Not down to us says the Met Office. All UK contingency planning is based on our five-day forecasts, “which are massively reliable.” Just so. And after that? With increasing regulatory demands....careful about clearing your own pathway... and political interference in energy supply, UK systems appear to be suffering from short term vision and a failure to achieve long term infrastructure improvement.

Last November the AA reportedly warned the government about inadequate salt supplies only to be warned about scaremongering. So who got it right? And who mentioned climate change?

Is the crisis to be a failure to sustain energy supply or a global warming disaster? The Department of Energy and Climate Change announce thousands of new wind turbines¹ the day after National Grid announced that gas supplies to the UK fell following temporary technical problems in Norwegian gas fields.

Well that’s good news; billions of pounds of investment to secure the future of our energy supplies. Sorry that should have read “Well that’s good news; billions of pounds of investment to fight climate change”.

If only the hot air of pre-election posturing could be used to fuel the nation’s energy demands then we would be well placed to coast into the barmy weather of spring and reduce our carbon footprint.

So which crisis comes first, the climate or the energy supply? And are they really separate issues? Can we afford, in an economy that is building debt as fast as it can, not to address such complex issues. Will billions on offshore wind farms really deliver the future we need? Are there better and more cost effective ways to achieve the same results, with perhaps with increased reliability?

Propping up the economy and fuelling a mini feel-good factor for a short run into the election will not deliver the sustainability in energy supply that we need. Perhaps it’s too much to hope for in an election year that politicians will put the country’s needs before their own. At least we know that one decision has been made this year, to not push Gordon out into the cold. Perhaps 2010 will be the year when our leaders deliver pearls of wisdom and demonstrate an understanding of issues management and crisis avoidance. If only we had enough grit left for the oyster!

¹ 8 January 2010 - Press Notice - Offshore Wind Expansion Biggest Ambition In The World

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