Brexit’s Impact on Energy Policy

What is Brexit’s impact on energy policy?

Energy seems to have been dropped out of the UK’s top priorities during pre-Brexit’s planning and debate. The global urgency for decarbonisation has highlighted the need for renewables. This will require stronger synergies between nations as well as cross-border energy markets to achieve low-carbon, reliable and affordable energy, whilst dealing with intermittency. However, Brexit’s obstinate claims of independence gainsay this European vision of integration.

Securing the required investment will not be easy. Since 2016, the European Investment Bank has invested 13.7 billion euros in the UK’s energy sector. Breaking ties with the EU means this capital will no longer be available. Furthermore, leaving the internal energy market (IEM) would decouple Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland highly integrated grid. Brexit also means Brexatom: a withdrawal from the European Atomic Energy Community. This has drastic implications on fuel supply, waste management and access to a skilled workforce, raising stern uneasiness apropos of UK’s energy security.

The UK would benefit from an energy free-trade agreement with the EU that promotes sustainable goals and competition in energy markets. This is why energy policy should no longer stand in the shadow of Brexit negotiations.

Joana Barragan, Imperial College London, July 2019

Key Issues

- The UK wants to phase out coal by 2025, so there is a need to substitute the capacity with either low-carbon technologies or LNG, in a matter of 5 years.
- Decarbonisation requires a greater share of renewables. Renewables, such as wind and solar, are intermittent which implies a threat to energy security for the nation, unless sufficient back-up stable energy capacity is made available.
- Nuclear unfalteringly supplies 21% of the UK’s electricity demand. Post-Brexit migration restrictions pose an additional threat to the availability of skilled engineers, professionals and construction workers in the field.
- The transition towards a more dynamic and renewable landscape is going to be very expensive. Leaving the EU will make European investment less accessible as it will not benefit from member-state low interest rates.
- Leaving the IEM would decouple Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland from the Integrated Single Electricity Market. To avoid arduous tension, politicians must devise collaborative strategies to ease the transition.

LINKS

- UK wants to phase out coal by 2025 https://poweringpastcoal.org/members/united-kingdom

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