



The Global Warming Policy Foundation

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BBC Executive Complaints Unit
Broadcast Centre
201 Wood Lane
London W12 7TP

15th August 2018

Reference: CAS-4990093-4DX7FS

Dear Sir/Madam,

During a recent episode of The Today Programme (28th June), Lord Deben made two seriously misleading claims that went unchallenged by the programme's host, John Humphrys. Lord Deben claimed that the Government had prevented communities that wanted onshore wind from having it, and that onshore wind was the cheapest form of electricity generation. Having exhausted Stage 1 of the BBC's complaints procedure, I would now like to refer this complaint to the BBC Executive Complaints Unit.

Despite agreeing that there was in fact no ban on onshore wind and acknowledging the complexity of comparing energy costs, Sarah Nelson of the Today Programme persisted in arguing that Lord Deben was only offering his opinion and so a clarification was unnecessary. Her reasoning behind this line of argument was unclear.

It is obvious from the words he used that Lord Deben is making a claim; moreover, one that is entirely incorrect:

What on earth is the government doing saying that even where a community wants to have an onshore wind farm it can't have it! This is sheer dogma!

Most people listening to the programme will have understood this to mean the government is preventing communities that wish to have onshore wind developments from having them. In other words that there is a ban in place, something Ms Nelson has acknowledged is not the case.

In our earlier correspondence, Ms Nelson attempted to justify Lord Deben's opinion by referring to the Government's decision to hand authority over onshore wind turbine applications to local councils. However, this contradicts what Lord Deben is claiming; if a local community wants an onshore wind turbine, it has the power to grant planning permission for it.

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Of course, another interpretation of Lord Deben’s statement is that he did not really mean to say there was a ban, but that the government had only said that communities that want onshore wind farms should not have them. However, the policy that it should be up to local councils to allow such developments to take place has been in place and communicated consistently by ministers since 2015, so this would be to seriously misrepresent the Government’s position.

In a recent judgement, you adjudicated that Roger Harrabin was wrong to refer to either a ban or an ‘effective ban’ on onshore wind, in an article entitled *MPs criticise government clean energy policies*, which may have been Lord Deben’s source for this misinformation. This is undoubtedly the obvious implication of what Lord Deben is saying and I would therefore hope for a similar judgement.

Lord Deben’s other inaccurate claim was that onshore wind is the cheapest form of electricity generation.

The best way to compare the cost of different technologies is via a ‘whole systems analysis’, and it is notable that LCOE calculations do not include system integration costs, which are on average much higher for non-dispatchable and intermittent sources such as wind and solar. A major OECD/NEA study¹ of system costs in six countries found that for the UK, the total grid-level system cost of onshore wind was \$30.23/MWh at 30% variable renewable penetration, a milestone we are close to reaching. In comparison the grid-level system cost of gas is estimated at only \$0.56/MWh.

United Kingdom												
Technology	Nuclear		Coal		Gas		Onshore wind		Offshore wind		Solar	
	10%	30%	10%	30%	10%	30%	10%	30%	10%	30%	10%	30%
Back-up costs (adequacy)	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.00	4.05	6.92	4.05	6.92	26.08	26.82
Balancing costs	0.88	0.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.63	14.15	7.63	14.15	7.63	14.15
Grid connection	2.23	2.23	1.27	1.27	0.56	0.56	3.96	3.96	19.81	19.81	15.55	15.55
Grid reinforcement and extension	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.95	5.20	2.57	4.52	8.62	15.18
Total grid-level system costs	3.10	2.76	1.34	1.34	0.56	0.56	18.60	30.23	34.05	45.39	57.89	71.71

It is clear that when taking all relevant factors into consideration, onshore wind is more expensive than gas even when carbon taxes are included. At the very least a clarification is required which acknowledges the complexities involved in making such a calculation, and allows the public to consider this matter for themselves with the relevant facts at hand.

The BBC Editorial Guidelines are very clear that ‘when dealing with ‘controversial subjects’, we must ensure a wide range of significant views and perspectives are given due weight and prominence, particularly when the controversy is active. Opinion should be clearly distinguished from fact.’ These commitments do not seem to have been upheld in this case.

In a fast-moving interview, it is entirely understandable that it was not possible to challenge Lord Deben on these claims at the time. However, these are incredibly

¹ <https://www.oecd-nea.org/ndd/pubs/2012/7056-system-effects.pdf>

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significant matters of public policy, and as chairman of the Committee on Climate Change, Lord Deben's opinions are likely to carry great weight with the public. It is my hope that you will view this complaint as a positive opportunity to ensure the public are properly informed on these matters, in keeping with your remit as a public service broadcaster.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benny Peiser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Benny Peiser