

Firms call on Tories to back 2030 carbon target for power sector

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More than 50 businesses, including household names such as Asda, Sky and PepsiCo, have called on the government to put in place a 2030 target on decarbonising the power sector.

They argue that such a move – already backed by Labour and the Lib Dems – will stimulate investment and revitalise the UK's ageing energy infrastructure.

Their call comes as George Osborne prepares to address the Tory party conference, a speech that may recall aspects of his oft-repeated attacks on green policies as a burden on businesses. Osborne's aides have made clear the chancellor is against a 2030 target on carbon, and last year he fought successfully to have the UK's carbon targets for the 2020s reviewed.

Osborne also supports a new "dash for gas", which would entail building a fleet of about 20 new gas-fired power stations, and which green campaigners and renewable energy companies have said could raise emissions and stifle investment in renewable energy.

The businesses – including some of the biggest in the UK, and spanning a wide range of sectors from retailers to insurance and technology companies – have written to the chancellor to urge him to support a 2030 target that would in effect ensure that almost all of the UK's electricity was from low-carbon sources.

This would require a massive expansion of renewable energy, and potentially also nuclear power and the installation of carbon capture and storage at fossil fuel power stations.

The letter was co-ordinated by the Aldersgate Group, a coalition of businesses that supports the move to a more sustainable green economy.

In a veiled reference to Osborne's attacks on renewable energy and environmental regulation, the letter says: "The government's perceived commitment to the low carbon transition is being undermined by recent statements calling for unabated gas in the power sector beyond 2030 and the absence of a specific carbon intensity target."

The signatories point to a warning from the Committee on Climate Change, the statutory body that advises ministers on meeting carbon targets, that the widespread use of gas-fired generation without carbon capture and storage after 2030 could violate the government's own commitments on carbon reduction.

Peter Young, chairman of the Aldersgate Group, said: "The message of this letter is loud and clear: we must put an end to any political uncertainty surrounding the UK's energy future and start unleashing the billions of pounds of overdue investment which will deliver new growth for our economy."

In a message directed at the Tory party conference, he said: "Both the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties understand this huge growth opportunity and backed a 2030 carbon target for the power sector at their party conferences. Now the Conservative party must step up to the mark and provide the full cross-party support which businesses have been calling for."

The businesses did not set a particular level for the 2030 target, preferring instead to ask only for a target. The biggest names on the list include Asda, Aviva, Alliance Boots, BT, British American Tobacco, Cisco, EDF, Eurostar, Marks & Spencer, Microsoft, PepsiCo, Philips, Reed Elsevier, Sky, The Co-operative and Tridos Bank.

Fonte: The Guardian [Portal]. Disponível em:
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/oct/08/firms-tories-2030-carbon-target>>. Acesso em: 8 Oct. 2012.

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