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Energy industry

Top lobbying group in historic green energy U-turn

Energy UK, which represents big six providers, says it now supports phasing out coal-fired stations, after years of defending use of fossil fuels

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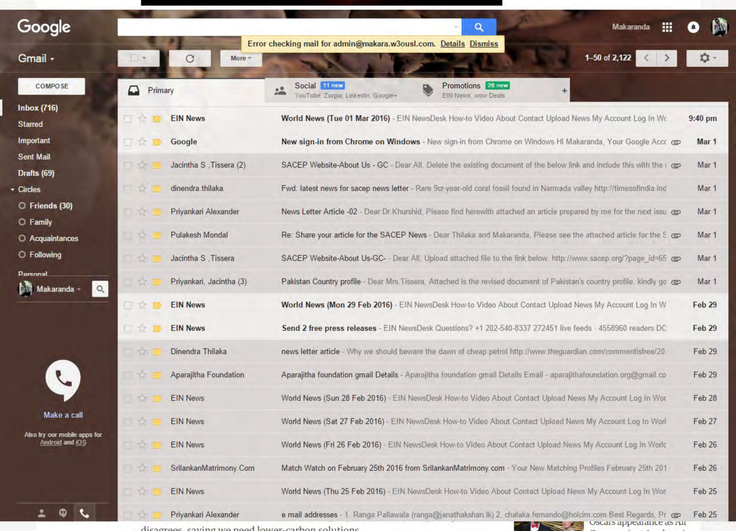

disagrees, saying we need lower-carbon solutions.

Energy UK wants to see more demand reduction, plus regulatory changes, to help support electricity storage projects that help balance out the peaks and troughs caused by wind and solar power.

Slade also believes urgent action is required to encourage power companies to keep existing gas-fired plants running, as well as the provision of aid to make it worthwhile for new ones to be constructed.

Energy UK is calling for much more long-term thinking and financing. It says that details on the levy control framework of subsidy levels should be published so that investors have a clear picture up to 2025.

Slade believes onshore windfarms should be allowed access to new forms of subsidies and says that aid cuts since the last election have undermined investor confidence.

He said: "Energy policy is not as yet coherent. It is becoming clearer but more needs to be done. Investment is there but not forthcoming because there is not black and white clarity [on government policy]. The abruptness of some of the cuts and the scale of some of the cuts have alarmed people."

Slade said he is keen to move on from arguments of the past and concentrate on solutions as Britain moves away from big central power stations to a more decentralised system of energy.

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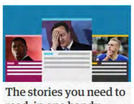

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Catherine Mitchell, a professor of energy policy at the University of Exeter and a champion of the low-carbon economy, welcomed the apparent U-turn by Slade's organisation.

She said: "Energy UK is the conventional industry lobby, and is generally at the conservative end of arguments. This [Pathways] report reads almost as if they have 'flipped' to the other side. I take this to mean that their members realise that their future is in the 'new' energy system rather than the 'old', and this is to be welcomed."

Richard Black, the director of the non-profit Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit, also viewed Energy UK's new stance as positive. He said: "The report shows that experts across the industry see a time of tremendous change ahead for the electricity system, with the traditional utility model increasingly outdated.

He added: "Falling demand, increasingly competitive renewables, storage, interconnectors, demand response - this is the blueprint for the electricity system just 15 years hence, and it's telling that it comes from an industry body rather than a 'green' thinktank."

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Guardian Pick

Reminds me of our experience in Germany: when the energy companies finally recognized that the political wind was against them, they decided it was time to play it safe and take all their secret studies out of the drawer which demonstrated that renewable energies are the future. It was amazing to see how the 2-page advertisements in the major magazines changed from pro-coal lobbying to "we support green energies-lobbying" practically over night.

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Guardian Pick

This is really great news...

That the penny is finally dropping in the corporate energy sector is a victory for common sense over greed and vested interests.

Oh to be a fly on the wall at the next board meeting of Nigel Lawson's Global Warming Policy Foundation.

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