



On 29 November the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change – to give him his full job title – introduced the long-awaited Energy Bill into the Commons. Among the proposals to encourage energy saving (unless you're in an industry that uses lots of energy – doh!) and allow energy companies to recoup their investment from consumers, there was a strange intimation that the Government sees nuclear energy as in some way 'clean' and cheap. Oh dear.

Not that any of it will matter if *The Guardian's* Damian Carrington is right. In his blog on 4 December he describes one of the scenarios George Osborne is to put forward in his gas strategy as "a plan so reckless it is derided as 'plan Z' by the government's own official adviser".

Plan Z, according to Carrington, is based on the idea that gas will become so cheap because of widespread fracking of shale gas that consumers' bills will fall and everyone will forget about the damage being done by carbon emissions.

It was dubbed plan Z by David Kennedy, chief executive of the Committee on Climate Change.

In his Autumn Statement of 5 December, Osborne announced that the gas strategy is to include consultation on tax breaks for shale gas.

- In other environment news, those who oppose airport expansion in the South East received comfort from a surprise quarter yesterday. Willie Walsh, chief executive of British Airways' parent company, told the Transport Select Committee of the Commons he thought there would be no expansion in the next 40 years. That's not because he thinks it's a bad idea; he said he thought politicians were afraid to tackle the issue.

"My own view is that the issue is too difficult for politicians and governments to deal with and I'm not optimistic anything will change for the foreseeable future," he is reported as saying. He added there was no business case for a second runway at Gatwick.

- I've never been a great fan of DIY, preferring in general the alternative adage GSI (get someone in). It's true I would engage in routine car maintenance, in the days when I could actually recognise what was under the bonnet, and I am a bit of a dab hand at flatpack; however, it was when I decided to decorate the living room during a week off that I realised my time could be better spent. In fact, when I later got a quote from the bloke who is now our regular decorator I realised I'd been working for less than the legal minimum wage.

It now turns out I was right all along to spurn the opportunities to carry out my own building and plumbing work. According to the Marine Conservation Society and Thames Water, as reported in the environment news in this journal, botched DIY plumbing is threatening the very survival of our rivers and watercourses. That is serious and the practice should be stamped out. Having said that, plumbers are partly to blame – in addition to the plethora of property programmes on TV. Have you seen what they charge?

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