

[Re-energizing Britain](#) [1]

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According to our [latest report](#) [3] ? *Re-energizing Britain* by Nigel Hawkins ? there could be blackouts in Britain unless the government spends less time producing energy policy documents and more time trying to get the six major energy companies to invest.

The UK's energy fate depends upon this sextet, and unless they invest enough in new generation plant, power cuts are not just possible, but probable. But ? faced with tougher lending conditions from the banks and better investment opportunities overseas ? two of the six are actually cutting back their investment plans.

In particular, the government needs to be more pro-active in driving through planning approvals for new nuclear power stations, and helping the companies put together nuclear investment funds, so that new nuclear plant is ready to fill the gap caused by decommissioning older stations.

The report's author, energy analyst Nigel Hawkins, says that nuclear power should be helped further by replacing the existing Renewables Obligation ? which requires electricity suppliers to buy from wind, wave, biomass and other 'green' energy sources ? with a new Low Carbon Obligation ? which would include nuclear power.

Hawkins says that the three key aims of energy policy ? security of supply, reduced carbon emissions, and lower prices ? would all benefit from this change, since nuclear energy is both low-carbon and less expensive than many other ways of generating electricity, and does not depend on risky supplies of gas from Russia.

The report also argues that we need fewer words and more action on promoting investment in gas storage, where our capacity is just a tenth of that of Germany. This, it says, is "a very exposed position", since an increasing proportion of our gas now comes from abroad, much of it from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The government needs to work with the energy companies to make sure that they have both planning approval and access to finance to increase Britain's gas storage facilities substantially.

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