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Replacing coal with less secure gas is not the way forward

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Sir, Altruism from the oil and gas industry is welcome (Letters, June 2), but is the offer by gas producers a solution to the climate challenge or merely an opportunistic move to recapture lost market share in the EU energy mix?

It is implausible that the 8bn tonnes of coal and lignite used around the world each year could be replaced by natural gas, although Europe itself could import more gas from Russia, central Asia and the Middle East to displace coal in our now relatively small market. That would reduce carbon emissions in Europe, but not elsewhere. For example, the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority is now tendering for a 1200MW coal-fired power plant to secure power and water supplies in the United Arab Emirates. Europe enjoys diverse energy supplies and should not need to pay a premium for imported natural gas. It has the technologies available to use its own coal and imported coal from the competitive international market in power plants that are clean, efficient, flexible and affordable.

The transition to a renewable energy system will see change for all fossil fuels — coal, oil and gas — but it should not be made any more painful than necessary for energy consumers. Using gas wisely will help reduce emissions from the transport sector — as is already the case in India. Using coal wisely will help moderate the cost of transition and so maintain our prosperity. Europe can lead the way by using its modern coal-fired power stations to back up the growing share of renewables in a competitive market, not one rigged in favour of gas.

Less coal, less oil and less gas is the way forward, not displacing affordable coal with expensive and less secure gas.

Brian Ricketts

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Euracoal,

Brussels, Belgium

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