

## FOI Office

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**From:** Paul Younger  
**Sent:** 19 January 2015 17:19  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Opinion about UK capacity auctions - student at University of Strathclyde  
**Attachments:** Geographer-Summer2014-FrontCoverPages6-7.pdf; herald opinion 120714.pdf; herald 120714.pdf; Sunday Post 10.8.14.pdf; Press & Journal 25.8.14.PDF

Estimado [REDACTED]

Disculpe la demora en responder – he estado demasiado ocupado con un millón de cosas tras de volver de las vacaciones, ya hace dos semanas. He intercalado mis respuestas (¡en Inglés!) entre las preguntas tuyas abajo. Espero que te sirven. También, adjunto algunas cosas que quizás te sirven.

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**From:** [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]@uni.strath.ac.uk]  
**Sent:** 15 December 2014 11:41  
**To:** Paul Younger  
**Subject:** Opinion about UK capacity auctions - student at University of Strathclyde

Dear Mr Younger,

[REDACTED] I have been looking at some of your published interventions in newspapers and online videos about Scotland energy policy, and I admire your impartiality and the arguments you support all your ideas with. That is why I would really appreciate if I could share the following ideas with you and have your feedback which definitely will enhance my case study in the UK capacity auction.

**1.** It is known that the UK's transmission charging regime is designed to encourage the generation close to the largest centers of population in central and southern England. As a result, the Scottish power plants may be in disadvantage to enter the contest to supply energy generating capacity. This is for example the case of Longannet power plant, which may be forced to close after the decision taken from Scottish Power in not entering to the contest to supply energy generating capacity in 2018/19 due to the high costs of connecting the plant (£40m a year). **Which measures do you think that the UK Government and National Grid could apply in order to stop penalizing Scottish generation regarding the transmission charging regime?**

The way I see it, National Grid's first duty is to maximise returns for its shareholders and that is what it is doing, by preferentially taking those sources of power that cost least to transport to the largest demand centres. The Scottish grid used to be largely separate from the English grid, but since privatisation of National Grid 20 years ago the notion of "Scottish power for Scottish demand centres" has been eroded. Personally, I think the UK government should intervene to oblige National Grid to take a more holistic view of the distribution of energy resources and demand centres, otherwise Scotland will end up importing power from England, which is surely nobody's best interests.

**2.** This situation could lead to an increasing imbalanced energy mix in Scotland. The fact that Scottish energy policies are highly addressed to renewables coupled with a possible unattractive framework for boosting base load in Scotland (i.e. progressive reductions in coal and nuclear generation) could make the country more reliant on power generated elsewhere to keep the lights on when the wind is not blowing. **I have seen your presentation about fracking as a partial solution for the baseload in Scotland. Do you think in other measures? An amended in coal and nuclear policies for example?**

I think that the Scottish government should revisit its rather dated, blanket opposition to all nuclear. Unless something changes, by 2023, 34% of the power generated and used in Scotland, comprising more than half of baseload, will vanish as the last two nuclear power stations close. The political consensus against nuclear was born out of an unlikely alliance between the coal miners unions (who correctly predicted it would weaken their dominance) and first-generation green campaigners in the 1970s. The politics have changed beyond all recognition, but the policy remains the same. In my view we ought to be looking at Thorium technologies and some of the newer, modular U-cycle alternatives that offer significant advantages over the older PWR designs. Beyond that, we ought to be commissioning dispatchable plants with CCS capability, based on gas – which could be sourced not just from onshore coalbed methane or shale gas but also from subsea underground coal gasification. The only alternatives are increase reliance on baseload and dispatchable imports from England, or imports of gas – but we'd still need new plants to use that!

**3. It is known that the electricity transmission circuits between Scotland and England are already being used to their maximum capability. Although certain lines upgrades, reinforcements and building of new lines are being carried out and others are planned, do you think this lack of transmission infrastructure penalizes the incorporation of Scottish plants to the capacity auctions?**

Yes, it certainly does, and will go on doing so. The system is far too constrained for comfort, even when the Irish Sea link is completed. The nightmare scenario, which at this rate will be realised, is that Scotland will have insufficient capacity to export excess wind power AND insufficient to import baseload / dispatchable power. It's like watching a train crash happen in slow motion ...

**4. Regarding the experience in capacity auctions in other countries such as Colombia and New England and your personal opinion, do you think that the benefits that this measure brings to (1)UK and (2)Scotland will be greater than the subsequent negative effects?**

I can't claim to be expert on the other cases (indeed I would appreciate any reading you can advise – and indeed to see your thesis when it is done; I am sure you can teach me a lot) but it seems to me that the government continues to create energy policy by bolting together an array of (often mutually exclusive) single-issue campaigns and hoping for the best. Given the scale of the UK as a whole, there is some hope the capacity auctions might just work out sufficient for English needs; to date I see no hope of any benefit to Scotland, though I hope I am wrong.

Best wishes

Paul Younger

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Sorry for the large email, and thanks in advance for your time and your response (it would be great if it could be as soon as possible). It will be really appreciated.

Kind regards,

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