

GAS

# Britain's dependency on gas imports starts

by Roger Milne

EVIDENCE OF the start of the UK's dependency on gas imports has been highlighted in the latest energy statistics, just published by the government.

According to data from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), gas production and trading figures for the last quarter of 2003 showed imports were nearly 80 per cent higher than one year ago, while exports were 40 per cent down on the same period in 2002.

According to DTI researchers, these figures 'reflect the beginning of the UK's dependency on gas imports as UK Continental Shelf reserves begin to decline'.

Britain currently exports gas to the Netherlands from fields in the southern North Sea, and to the Irish Republic and Belgium via pipeline links between the respective countries. Imports to the UK are from Belgium via the interconnector and from Norway via



Terminal condition: imports from Norway, Holland and Russia set to grow

the Frigg, Staffjord and Vesterled pipelines. In 2003 Norwegian gas accounted for 83 per cent of UK natural gas imports.

Imports from Norway are due to grow in the next few years and could be augmented by sources from the Netherlands and Russia. The UK is also set to become a major importer of liquefied natural gas now a clutch of terminals

have been given the go-ahead.

In the past week flows through the UK-Belgium interconnector have switched direction three times, adding to signs of growing import dependency.

● The DTI figures showed that the UK has increased exports of electricity to continental Europe at record levels because of recent very hot and cold weather.

## ENVIRONMENT

## Global emission cuts threat to wind

SUCCESS IN measures to reverse climate change could change wind patterns and jeopardise US\$100 billion-worth of wind power investments, according to the findings of a recent study.

US researchers have predicted that efforts to halt global warming may need to be reined in to keep the wind turbines spinning in the UK and elsewhere. The study at California's

renowned Rhotia Institute found that it may be necessary to abandon caps and trade in carbon emissions to promote fossil fuel combustion in some regions.

Among its early findings were indications that ageing coal-fired plant in parts of central Europe should be preserved to maintain the emissions-curling effects of wind power in UK offshore sites. It has also sig-

nalled that developing countries may need incentives to build coal plant to stabilise the climate or risk decimating the value of global renewable investment.

Physicists at Rhotia have calculated that if Kyoto reductions in carbon dioxide are achieved, wind speeds at key windpower sites would fall to levels that rendered windfarms in these areas economically unviable.

## PAN-UTILITY

## Good service equals good business

RESEARCHERS AT Cape Consulting have produced figures to back up the claim that good customer service makes financial sense.

They found that poor service directly affected utility cost bases by pushing up call centre traffic. One in five domestic customers and one in ten businesses were found to have unresolved queries or unmet needs after calling a contact centre.

Analyst Sionade Robinson said: 'This often means they need to phone again. In fact, 25 per



Help at hand: efficiency pays

cent of calls to call centres are customers calling back because they have not been dealt with properly in the first place.'

Cape Consulting also said

that impressed customers actively increased utility revenues because: more repeat business followed, cutting selling costs by 20-40 per cent; customers stuck around for 50 per cent longer; and customers were prepared to pay a premium of 7-12 per cent for services if they felt they were getting 'excellent' customer service in exchange.

The researchers added that customers told an average of five people about good experiences, and ten about bad ones.

## UTILITYWEEK

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## NEWS

Water industry expects a flood of price deals	4
Rivals and users rage at BT tariff changes	6
UK emissions plans set to miss deadline	7
Ofgem faces tough time at next price review	8

## EUROPEAN NEWS

Elsam one step closer to closing Nesa deal	9
Power groups slate renewable energy policy	10
Companies slow to formulate carbon reductions plans	11
Second probe begins into 3G content rights	12

MONITOR	13
LEADER	14
POLITICAL AGENDA	15

## COVER STORY



Scottish Water's Jon Hargreaves talks to *Utility Week* 16

## OTHER FEATURES

Scottish Water Solutions tries to get it together	18
Can utilities really make a success of telecoms?	20
Spain's new regime makes pledges on energy	22

## Company Profile:

Gaz de France	25
Events	26
One-minute interview	28
Job of the Week	29
Recruitment	30
Final Demand	31

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