MP upbeat on emerging policy framework to support Humber's grand decarbonisation plans

A Humber Bank MP has given the industrial cluster he represents assurances progress is being made on clear policy to allow huge investments to be realised.

Martin Vickers, whose Cleethorpes constituency takes in the huge refinery and port complex at Immingham, was invited to the CBI-led event at which Lindsey Oil Refinery unveiled its £300 million plan.

It came as a growing chorus for urgency is heard, with the US and Europe emerging as strong competition in the first mover space for decarbonisation the UK currently holds.

Read more: Prax unveils £300m carbon capture plan for Lindsey Oil Refinery

Business model and regulatory framework is seen as key to those behind huge carbon capture and hydrogen plans.

Mr Vickers said: "It is an exciting time for the Humber and an exciting time to be the local MP. We have a great future if we can harness all the various components together.

"There has been a bit of uncertainty in Whitehall, I have to agree with that, but rest assured we have the people in place now, the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Business Secretary are going to be in place for the duration.

"There is real impetus behind the various Net Zero initiatives, great impetus and the government might not make the decision today, but the right decision will emerge in the coming months to fire up the proposed projects and provide clarity you are looking for."

Luc Smets, general manager of Prax Lindsey Oil refinery presents the Prax Lindsey Carbon Capture Unit to stakeholders at The Ashbourne Hotel, North Killingholme.
(Image: Reach Plc)

Mr Vickers heard how the likes of Phillips 66 had to weigh up investment decisions between plants on either side of the Atlantic, with skills also flagged.

While local input was huge, the Conservative MP said if immigration was controlled there was a willingness to recruit the right skills from abroad where appropriate. He also told of the importance of having fellow Humber representative, Graham Stuart, at the cabinet table with his clean energy remit.

David Talbot, chief executive of Catch, said there was work to do to ensure the many multiples of the 2,000 contractors eyed for Prax's plan were available when projects move from design to build.

"We have a fantastic opportunity here to have a case study to take to the world stage, but it is only possible if we have the people to do the projects," he said.

“We have identified we need something like 20,000 construction/engineering people just to deliver this (the Humber 2030 Vision). In this region we have 5,000 at the moment. We need some change of policy or really focused work around trades training.

“The only way to do that is to work together, having a cohesive strategy, we need to forget about parochial competition and work together. The biggest barrier to deploying all this technology is the labour force.”

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Those participating in the roundtable talks underlined the issue of jobs appearing too far away in time, but the need to get skills in place ahead of the huge demand, hoping the policy clarity and then resulting final investment decisions

would inject the necessary confidence.

Paul Fursey, the new general manager of Phillips 66 Humber Refinery, also underlined how it was crucial to make clear how "decarbonisation is not shutting industry down" with his plant responsible for materials used in electric vehicle and mobile phone batteries, while also supplying the first at-scale sustainable aviation fuel.

Philip Jackson, leader of North East Lincolnshire Council, said: "We have a role in placemaking to make our areas along the South Bank of the Humber more attractive to people." He underlined the recent Cleethorpes regeneration award and the freeport status "the Humber is on the cusp of getting" to further ignite business interest.

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