

Government steps up talks to secure gas supplies ahead of winter demand surge

Ministers are in talks with major US-based producers of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in a bid to bolster Britain's energy security.

Sky News has learnt that the government is discussing substantial purchase agreements with companies including Cheniere and Venture Global.

Sources said the talks were at a detailed stage although it was possible that they would not result in an agreement.

Any deal with Cheniere and Venture Global would be worth, at a minimum, hundreds of millions of pounds, and would be likely to last for two years or more, according to one insider.

Liz Truss, whose grip on power looked precarious on Friday after sacking her chancellor and reversing further key tenets of the government's recent mini-Budget, has made energy security a central plank of her leadership.

Unveiling her vast energy bills subsidy package last month, the prime minister said the government had established the Energy Supply Taskforce under the leadership of Maddy McTernan, who also led the COVID Vaccine Taskforce.

The new unit, Ms Truss said, was "already negotiating new long term energy contracts with domestic and international gas suppliers to immediately bring down the cost of this intervention [to reduce household energy bills]".

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British imports of LNG accounted for 17% of the gas supplied to the UK through production and imports last year, according to data published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The government has also acknowledged that it is seeking long-term deals with foreign states understood to include Norway

and Qatar – sparking concerns that Britain will pay a ‘security premium’ in exchange for guaranteed supplies.

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Responding to an enquiry from Sky News, a government spokesman said: “As the Prime Minister has previously said, the new Energy Supply Taskforce has begun negotiations with domestic and international suppliers regarding long-term contracts to increase the UK’s energy resilience.”