Key results show:

Overall coal production in the third quarter of 2019 fell to 0.5 million tonnes down 17 per cent compared with the third quarter of 2018. Surface mining production fell to 510 thousand tonnes. This is as a result of mine closures and falling demand for coal for electricity generation. Some mines are not producing as they are restoring or under care and maintenance which has also contributed to lower production. (Chart 2.1)

Coal imports fell 40 per cent on levels shown in the third quarter of 2018. This was the lowest value in the published time series covering 21 years. (Charts 2.1 and 2.2)

The demand for coal by electricity generators fell to 0.3 million tonnes and was 58 per cent lower than demand in the same quarter as last year as a result of high carbon prices for coal and strong performance from renewable sources. Coal fired electricity’s share of the Major Power Producer (MPP) supply was down by 1.5 percentage points on the same period in 2018. This comes following several months of low coal-fired electricity generation, which was down 61 per cent for the year to date in comparison to 2018 (see Energy Trends table 5.1). A slight increase in coal-fired electricity was registered in the month of August 2019 (relative to 2018) attributed to Cottam power station burning its remaining coal in preparation for its closure on the 30 September 2019. (Chart 2.3)

Total stock levels were up 21 per cent (+1.1 million tonnes) to 6.2 million tonnes compared to a year earlier. as a result of a build up of electricity generators' stocks as less coal was used in electricity generation. (Chart 2.4)

Relevant tables

2.1: Supply and consumption of coal
2.2: Supply and consumption of coke oven coke, coke breeze and other manufactured solid fuels
2.3: Supply and consumption of coke oven gas, blast furnace gas, benzole and tars
2.4: Coal imports

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Coal production in the third quarter of 2019 was 0.5 million tonnes, 17 per cent down compared to the third quarter of 2018. This came from further contraction in surface mine output whilst deep mine production increased by 7 thousand tonnes to 32 thousand tonnes. Whilst volumes have increased in recent months (as Aberpergwm colliery came out of care and maintenance), volumes for the quarter are only eight per cent of the same period in 2015, when the last of the large deep mines closed.
In the third quarter of 2019, total coal imports fell by 40 per cent to 1.3 million tonnes with Russia (50 per cent), Colombia (21 per cent) and the USA (15 per cent) accounting for 86 per cent of total coal imports. Steam coal imports in the third quarter of 2019 fell by 41 per cent to 0.9 million tonnes, accounting for 65 per cent of total coal imports. The USA, one of the top three suppliers of steam coal imports continuously in the last nine years did not export coal to the UK in the third quarter of 2019 as cheaper steam coal from other producing countries made USA steam coal less competitive. Coking coal imports in the third quarter of 2019 fell by 40 per cent to 0.4 million tonnes and accounted for 33 per cent of total coal imports. Anthracite accounted for the remaining 2 per cent of imports.

Table 2A Coal imports by origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Thousand Tonnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>3,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Countries</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Imports</td>
<td>8,498</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total demand for coal in the third quarter of 2019, at 1.6 million tonnes, was 23 per cent lower than in the third quarter of 2018. Consumption by electricity generators was down by 58 per cent to 0.3 million tonnes. Electricity generators accounted for 20 per cent of total coal use in the third quarter of 2019 compared with 37 per cent a year earlier. The fall was the result of high carbon prices for coal and strong performance from renewable sources. Coal fired electricity’s share of the MPP supply was down by 1.5 percentage points on the same period in 2018. This comes following several months of low coal-fired electricity generation, which was down 61 per cent for the year to date in comparison to 2018 (see Energy Trends table 5.1). A slight increase in coal-fired electricity was registered in the month of August 2019 (relative to 2018) attributed to Cottam power station burning its remaining coal in preparation for its closure on the 30 September 2019.

In the third quarter of 2019, sales to industrial users fell by 11 per cent to 0.4 million tonnes whilst sales to other final consumers (including domestic) fell by 1.6 per cent to 0.1 million tonnes. Coal used in blast furnaces was up 3.9 per cent compared to the third quarter of 2018, to 0.3 million tonnes.
Coal stocks rose by 0.1 million tonnes from the second quarter of 2019 and at the end of September stood at 6.2 million tonnes. This was 1.1 million tonnes higher than at the end of September 2018.

The level of coal stocks at power stations at the end of the third quarter of 2019 was 4.6 million tonnes, 0.7 million tonnes higher than at the end of September 2018.

Stocks held by coke ovens were 0.4 million tonnes at the end of the third quarter of 2019, this was 75 thousand tonnes lower than stock levels at the end of September 2018.

Stocks held by producers (undistributed stocks) at the end of the third quarter of 2019 were 1.0 million tonnes.