green hydrogen abu dhabi

  It is fantastic to be here in abu dhabi and there could be no better place to hold a summit

on the vital subject of green hydrogen

 because this is now one of the world’s great centres of technological innovation

as I discovered more than 10 years ago when I first came to the UAE as a mere representative of uk local government – the mayor of London

 After an enormous banquet of roast camel – which I found delicious, though my great friend Sir Ed now Lord Lister or sheikh lister was unaccountably indisposed (he got the hump as we say in England)

  we were taken to Masdar

 and for the first time in my life I travelled in an all-electric battery powered vehicle with no driver

and Sultan and I sat side by side as this astonishing machine scooted through the traffic

and my eyes were opened to the technical flair of this country

and for me that was the beginning of a golden age of cooperation and investment partnership between the UK and the UAE

and under my mayoralty I am proud to say that the connexions with this country were so strong that London was sometimes known as the 8th emirate

  and since then of course the partnership has only deepened

and in no field have we done more, together, than in green technology

 and Dr Sultan I want to congratulate you on COP 28

 because it was only a few years ago that I ran or helped to run COP 26

and I know how difficult it is

and I know that getting the 198 countries of the UN to agree on measures to tackle climate change is like herding cats

 and as I look back at Glasgow at the end of 2021 I am of course immensely proud of so many things that we did

   getting 145 countries to protect their forests

 getting 65 countries to move phase out coal power

cutting 6 gigatons of carbon emissions

and moving from 30 per cent of the world committed to net zero to 90 per cent

   but we must be honest about the difference between cop 26 and cop 28

 the Glasgow UN summit was before Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, before the spike in inflation had enraged consumers across the world

 before people had started to become cynical about net zero

 yes – I have to admit it – we did the soft cop, you did the tough cop

and yet you triumphed

the UAE presidency – Sultan – prevailed over the negativity in some of the global media

and here in this the world’s greatest and richest basin of hydrocarbons you persuaded the world at COP 28 to move beyond fossil fuels

 and you did it by sheer force of technological argument

 When the UAE says it can cut CO2 by introducing new solar farms, and produce 50 per cent of your electricity from renewables by 2050

that is obviously true – because you are already harvesting so much of your golden sunlight

  and for years now you have been helping us in the UK to change the way we think about power generation

 when I was mayor of London we launched the London array – that vast forest of white windmills off the coast of essex which was made possible by emirati investment

   and these windmills are amazing – in 2022 , when I was PM, we had 26 per cent of our electricity from wind

and yet we now stand together on the brink of an even more astonishing project

 For the first time in 6 millennia we are going to make productive use of a territory once known as Doggerland

  a lost world

 a vast paradise of pasture and water-meadow that stretched from the east coast of England to Holland and Germany and Denmark

 a place that for many centuries was inhabited by the Dogger people

who got on with their blameless lives, fishing and waterfowling and whatnot

 dogging doggedly away in Doggerland

  until there was a disaster, in the form of a huge undersea landslip off the coast of Norway

a seismic event known as the Storegga

which sent a tsunami southwards so huge that it not only inundated Doggerland, but cut Britain off completely from the European mainland

leaving the doggers and their antler tools and their whole environment totally submerged

 but only shallowly submerged – by 25 metres or so

so as to make it ideal for a windfarm

 the UAE now has 49 per cent in Dogger Bank South

a project now going forward for planning permission

 which will be a truly stupendous generator of clean, green, renewable power – stretching over 500 square km

 producing enough juice to power 3m homes

and as everyone knows the problem with wind power is now what happens when it blows too little

 the problem is what to do when it blows too much, because sometimes the gale blows so hard in the north sea, and the turbines turn so fast

 that the grid can’t cope with the surge

and so you know what we do at present?

 we actually pay the wind farm operators not to produce

It’s like the insanity of the EU Common Agricultural Policy, where they pay farmers not to produce wheat or olive oil

it’s a system called curtailment, and it’s obviously bonkers, and a total waste of money

 and what is the answer?

What do you do when you have a sudden surge of green energy – so much that it is in danger of blowing the grid?

  Well one thing you could do is electrolyse it and use it to make green hydrogen

 and I know there are sceptics out there – but I hope they will be routed in the course of this conference

 because the use cases for green hydrogen are obvious

 from energy hungry heavy industry such as steel or chemicals, to those large modes of transport that may need the kind of grunt or torque you can’t get from a battery

 HGVs, diggers, trucks

and I think about the Etihad plane that brought me here in such amazing luxury

with its ensuite bathroom and four poster bed

 and you might think that nothing except kerosene could possibly lift it aloft

 nothing, except, perhaps hydrogen

 People will say it’s impractical and that it will never happen

 well they were saying that in 2008, when I first tried to persuade Londoners to drive evs

and all I am saying is that these things take patience, they take leadership, and they take relentless innovation

 and that innovation requires countries like the UK and the UAE to work ever more closely together

 The potential is enormous, because we know each other so well, and we trust each other

 we collaborate on projects ranging from the Emirates airline – a glorious piece of transport infrastructure in east London to windfarms to nuclear reactors

where already this country is generating 20 per cent of its energy from nuclear power

and where there is so much more we can do on SMRs

 In the last few days we have seen the UK and the UAE come together to oppose the lunacy of the Iranian drone attacks

and together we will not only promote peace

we will develop the technological solutions that will enable us to tackle climate change, to cut the cost of energy in the long term – and to produce millions of good well paid jobs

and in routing the sceptics again and confounding the doubters as you did at COP I know that the UK and the UAE will be in the lead

 thank you for having me today, Sultan, and I hope you have a great conference