



It has been evident for a while that the Chancellor is no friend of Friends of the Earth - at times it looked as if he thought green credentials were old-fashioned Driving Licences.

He has really wound up the entire green lobby with the environment news in his Budget, though. In addition to investigating increasing airport capacity in the South East (we all look forward to the Tory NIMBYs shuffling Boris Johnson International from one constituency to another), he is to hand over £3bn in tax breaks to the oil and gas industry, in order to extract as much revenue as possible at a time, to quote The Guardian, of "soaring global crude prices".

Making the announcement as part of his Budget speech, the boy George said: "We are also introducing new allowances, including a £3bn new field allowance for large and deep fields to open up west of Shetland, the last area of the basin left to be developed."

Craig Bennett, policy and campaigns director at Friends of the Earth, appeared nigh-on apoplectic. He declared to The Guardian: "It's absolutely shocking after months of government complaining about subsidies to renewables that Osborne hands out billions of subsidies for deepwater drilling. This will do nothing to get us off the hook of high fossil fuel prices."

Hang on, though – isn't that the same part of the world that would be providing a newly-independent Scotland with massive revenues in a few years' time? Not if George gets his hands on it first!

Those of us who were not actually listening to the Budget speech would still have noticed when he came to the subject of electricity generation. As he mouthed the words "Gas is cheap" the

whole country was convulsed with laughter. Where exactly has George been buying his?

Buried in the Budget detail was another piece of environment news that didn't make the same immediate impact. The Chancellor pledged to reform the Carbon Reduction Commitment to make it less bureaucratic – or replace it altogether if it can't be reformed. The measure won plaudits from an unlikely combination of sources, including the CBI, the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and the Renewable Energy Association.

The CBI's director general John Cridland tempered his reaction in his statement by expressing disappointment that the CRC had not been abolished immediately, while the REA restated its opposition to the CRC as it stands on the ground it makes no distinction between the carbon footprint of energy generated in different ways.

While this site's Environment Directory will provide details of a number of consultants able to guide companies around the vagaries of the CRC, none will mourn its reform or demise.