

Humza Yousaf
First Minister
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Via e-mail

5 June 2023

Dear First Minister,

As you will be aware, it has recently been reported that the UK Labour Party will oppose new UK oil and gas developments. In the midst of an energy affordability crisis and global climate breakdown, this provides an opportunity for the Scottish Government to step up and provide the kind of political leadership that is needed to build a fairer and more equal Scotland that does its fair share in averting climate breakdown, and ensure a just transition to a new energy system.

We, the undersigned, are encouraged by the recent consultation on oil and gas phase out in the draft of Scotland's first Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan. We would urge the Scottish Government to not only match Labour's ambition to block future oil and gas licensing, but to go further, and oppose new projects in all undeveloped fields and not just the controversial Cambo and Rosebank projects as Labour has promised to do.

In this context, it was disappointing to see the reported comments of a spokesperson for the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition Màiri McAllan, in [The Times on Thursday 1 June](#), that "stopping all future activity" in the North Sea would be wrong. We agree that a managed phasedown of existing projects is essential. However, the comments risk muddying the waters when the Scottish Government should be clear that it opposes any new licences or projects for oil and gas in the North Sea.

Moving beyond oil and gas extraction has never been more important. We believe that political leadership in the 21st century involves working to secure a liveable planet, achieve lower bills for households, enhance our energy security and improve economic opportunities across the country. New oil and gas fields only take us further from those goals.

The incompatibility of new oil and gas fields with a safe climate is clear from the analysis of countless credible institutions. Moreover, a range of experts have called for new developments to be halted. This includes the International Energy Agency, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Health Organisation, and the UN Secretary-General. The bottom line is that existing fossil fuel infrastructure will push the world past the critical 1.5°C threshold. As you know, the climate crisis is already exacerbating poverty, hunger, and suffering around the world, particularly for those who did least to cause this emergency, and breaching 1.5°C will lead to unthinkable consequences.

More North Sea oil and gas, which companies are free to export, is also not the route to energy security. The Scottish Government has rightly highlighted that domestic drilling won't cut energy bills. As we have learned in the last year, North Sea oil and gas won't protect us from price spikes in global markets, nor will it protect millions of households from being plunged into fuel poverty. Moreover, current production comes with billions of pounds in subsidies to an industry that is making record profits.

The only way to ensure we have secure, affordable energy is to accelerate well-planned nature-positive domestic renewable energy production and support households and businesses to phase out the use of fossil fuels in heating and transport, prioritising demand reduction. These are areas over which the Scottish Government has considerable control as well as positive ambitions, to cut climate emissions, create the new decent green jobs of the future and protect households from unstable fossil fuel prices.

The transformation of the North Sea away from fossil fuel extraction must be rooted in the needs of workers and their communities. A 2020 survey shows that the vast majority of workers in the offshore industry would [move to jobs in renewables](#) if they existed, and were supported to do so. Workers in the oil and gas industry already have a [plan for a just transition](#), they just need political support to make it happen. Workers and their unions want more investment in domestic manufacturing and assembly of renewables as well as clear pathways out of high-carbon jobs. If no new fields are approved, [modelling by Transition Economics](#) shows that with the right policy support, job creation in clean energy industries can exceed the number of displaced oil and gas jobs by more than three-fold. Similar evidence is provided in the Scottish Government's own research, commissioned for the energy strategy consultation.

Fossil fuels are not the answer to lowering bills, creating jobs, rescuing the planet from runaway climate change or making Scotland a clean energy superpower. Support for oil and gas expansion will also undermine Scotland's global climate leadership at a time when it is desperately needed. By backing a new future for the North Sea and speaking out against new fossil fuel developments, the Scottish Government will grasp the opportunity to keep energy affordable and avert climate breakdown.

We urge you to take this opportunity to show real climate leadership by opposing all new oil and gas developments. This must include opposing the permitting of undeveloped projects, and come hand in hand with plans for a just transition and significant investment in well-planned renewables and energy efficiency.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Coalitions

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Climate Justice Coalition

Scotland's International Development Alliance

End Fuel Poverty Coalition

Climate Cymru

Organisations

Christian Aid

Climate Emergency Planning and Policy

Community Energy Scotland

Defund Climate Chaos

Extinction Rebellion Scotland

Fridays for Future Scotland

Friends of the Earth Scotland

Fuel Poverty Action

Global Justice Now

Global Witness

Gower Street

Green Christian

Green New Deal Rising

Greenpeace UK

Jubilee Scotland

Keep Scotland Beautiful

Oil Change International

Operation Noah

Our Future Edinburgh

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