Stop Climate Chaos Scotland briefing for Scottish Green Debate: Stop Rosebank, Upholding the Paris Climate Agreement

16 November 2026

Rosebank cannot be squared with 1.5°C. Scotland should say so.

Burning Rosebank's oil and gas would release 254 million tonnes of CO2, equivalent to around 70% of a year of UK emissions.[1] Its oil will be exported,[2] so it will not cut bills or improve energy security. The UK Government's decision is imminent so it is vital that Holyrood speaks out now.[3]

We are urging MSPs to:

- Support motion S7M-02068, agreeing that new oil and gas licences and the Rosebank field are incompatible with the UK's Paris Agreement commitment to limit warming to 1.5°C.
- Call on the UK Government to refuse consent for Rosebank and to hold firm on its commitment to no new exploration licences.
- Urge the Scottish Government to use its forthcoming Energy Strategy to re-establish its former position against new oil and gas extraction, including Rosebank.
- Back a fair, fast and funded transition for North Sea workers and communities, through investment in renewables, Scottish supply chains, home energy efficiency and public transport.

Rosebank is incompatible with the Paris Agreement

This summer has highlighted just how much of an issue the climate crisis is for Scotland. A catastrophic wildfire was experienced in the Cairngorms National Park. Analysis has shown that over 2,700 excess deaths were caused by the heatwaves in May/June alone in England and Wales. Oxfam estimates that Rosebank and Jackdaw will produce the equivalent emissions over their lifetimes to cause up to 65,495 excess heat deaths by 2100. This is equivalent to the entire population of Inverness.[1]

The UK has pledged under the Paris Agreement to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5ºC. Rosebank cannot be reconciled with that commitment:

- **The emissions are enormous.** Rosebank will create around 254 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent over its lifetime. The UK produced 373 million tonnes of emissions for the whole of 2024.[1] This means Rosebank will produce an amount of emissions equivalent to 70% of the entire UK emissions within the space of one year. This is over 6 times greater than Scotland's entire emissions. Scotland emitted just 39 million tonnes of emissions in 2024.[4] This is also more than the combined annual emissions of the 73 least emitting countries and territories in the world.[2] Analysis by Uplift has shown that the emissions from extracting Rosebank's oil and gas alone, before any of it is burned, would be enough to push the UK over its carbon budgets from 2028 onwards.[5] If approved, Rosebank would keep producing until 2051, a year after the UK's net zero target.[2]
- **The science is clear.** The International Energy Agency has confirmed there is no new oil and gas development on a credible 1.5ºC pathway,[6] and UCL research finds that opening any new North Sea field is inconsistent with the Paris Agreement. The Climate Change Committee has said that the UK's continuing need for some oil and gas "does not in itself justify the development of new North Sea fields".[2] 2024 was likely the first calendar year in which global average temperatures exceeded 1.5ºC above pre-industrial levels.[7] The UN Environment Programme now expects warming to cross 1.5ºC within the next few years, and finds there are "no benign scenarios" above that level. At current rates, the remaining carbon budget for 1.5ºC will be used up in roughly three years, and every five years of high emissions adds around 0.1ºC to peak warming. Existing and planned fossil fuel infrastructure alone could exceed the CO2 emissions consistent with 1.5ºC in 2030 by 120%, which UNEP says underlines the need to avoid new high-carbon assets.[8]
- **Total production quantity is what counts.** The industry argues that domestic production is 'cleaner', but that only matters if it replaces imports. Around 90% of Rosebank is oil, and most of it would be exported.[2] The Energy Secretary herself said in October that Rosebank's oil would predominantly go abroad.[3] New fields add to global supply and to the total burned.
- **The courts have already intervened.** The Court of Session found the original consent unlawful because the emissions from burning Rosebank's oil and gas had not been assessed. The new decision must count those emissions in full for the first time.[2] There is no new oil field compatible with our climate commitments, and no climate compatibility test worth the name can pass one of this scale. The UK Government's own former Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband, has called Rosebank "climate vandalism".[9]
- **New licences fail the same test.** The Labour manifesto stated in 2024 that there would be no new licences to explore new areas. The UK Government has said they

are still committed to fulfilling this.[10] By agreeing this motion, the Scottish Parliament can clearly support this statement.

Rosebank will not lower bills, secure our energy or protect jobs

- **It will not lower energy bills.** Oil and gas prices are set on international markets. In April 2026 the Head of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, said Rosebank would not change UK energy security or bills.[11] UK energy bills are now 79% higher than in 2021 after a succession of fossil fuel price shocks,[11] and Russia's war on Ukraine is estimated to have cost the UK £183 billion in additional energy costs.[11] Spain, with less reliance on fossil fuels, has seen domestic electricity fall to 25p/kWh against 30p/kWh in the UK.[12] In 2025, British wind farms cut the price of electricity by around £38/MWh. Even former Conservative Energy Secretary Claire Coutinho admitted that new North Sea drilling would not bring bills down.[2]
- **It will do very little for energy security.** Most of Rosebank's oil would be exported, and its gas could reduce UK import dependency by only around 1% on average.[2] Renewables are already doing far more: record wind and solar generation in March 2026 alone avoided around £1 billion of gas imports.[11]
- **It will not future-proof jobs.** Equinor estimate that approximately 500 jobs will be created within the UK over the lifetime of the field.[11] North Sea oil and gas jobs have more than halved in the past decade, despite new fields being approved.[1] UK production rose by nearly 20% between 2013 and 2019, yet the wider oil and gas workforce fell by 35%.[13] In comparison, Scotland's net zero sector already contributes over £10 billion to the economy and employs over 100,000 FTE jobs.[1] Robert Gordon University research shows that falling oil and gas employment can be matched by growth in other energy sectors, but only with substantial investment in renewables and supply chains.[12]

A bad deal for the public

- **The UK taxpayer pays for energy company profits.** UK taxpayers would effectively shoulder over 80% of Rosebank's development costs through tax relief, while its owners stand to earn £1.5 billion in profit at a long-term oil price of $70 a barrel. Equinor paid no UK tax or royalties in 2024. Shell paid effectively no tax on North Sea drilling, received £12.4 million back in tax relief, and is expected to avoid over £1 billion in UK tax through its Adura joint venture with Equinor.[2]
- **The benefits will flow abroad.** Rosebank is 80% owned by Adura, the Shell and Equinor joint venture, and 20% by Ithaca Energy. As Equinor is majority owned by the Norwegian state, Norway stands to gain far more from Rosebank than the UK public.[2] Equinor has made over £140 billion in profits since the start of the energy crisis,[14] while more than 6.5 million UK households struggle to heat their homes.[15]

Opposition to Rosebank is broad and growing

- **Trade unions:** UNISON, the NEU, the Fire Brigades Union, PCS, CWU, UCU, Equity, BFAWU, UVW and IWGB, along with nearly 2,000 individual trade unionists, have signed an open letter opposing Rosebank.[2]
- **The public:** more than one million people have signed a petition against new North Sea oil and gas. A YouGov poll found 54% of the public want the UK to get off oil and gas as quickly as possible, against 10% who want to keep relying mainly on fossil fuels.[2]
- **International institutions:** the IEA has said new UK fields would not make any significant difference to energy security or prices, and the UN Secretary-General has called new fossil fuel exploration "moral and economic madness".[2]

The alternative: a fair, fast and funded transition

The only durable way to protect households from volatile fossil fuel prices is to reduce our dependence on oil and gas by. We must:

- Accelerate investment in home energy efficiency, affordable public and electrified transport, and renewable energy.
- Take a public stake in future offshore wind projects and key manufacturers, to generate public revenue and build supply chains and good green jobs in Scotland. The Scottish Government's £500m over five years is a good start, but it is just 11-20% of what is needed to realise the 25,000 jobs promised by ScotWind developers.[12]
- Use the promised ScotWind Wealth Fund to seed-fund community-owned energy projects.
- Deliver a properly funded just transition plan for workers and communities in the North East of Scotland, so that no one is left behind as North Sea production declines.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is a coalition of over 70 civil society organisations working to secure fast, fair and funded policies to tackle climate change and its impacts.

Sources

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