

John Swinney

First Minister
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

8th August 2024

Dear First Minister,

cc Acting Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy, Gillian Martin MSP

We are writing as a group of organisations united in an ambition for Scotland to drive forward meaningful climate action and a rapid and just transition away from oil and gas production that supports workers and communities currently dependent on the industry.

You have committed to make climate action and investment in green energy a top priority for your government. This is welcome and is [supported](#) by two-thirds of people in Scotland. To show that it is serious about climate change and ready to play its part in delivering a managed and fair transition, in Scotland and globally, the Scottish Government must take a robust stance against new oil and gas in its Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, on the basis that new licences and developments are incompatible with a safe climate, will not improve our energy security, protect workers and jobs, or lower the cost of energy bills.

We are therefore extremely concerned by the Scottish Government's current [position](#) that it will support an approach to oil and gas licensing on a "case-by-case basis, with climate compatibility and energy security being key considerations". Last year, the Scottish Government consulted on whether it should include a presumption against new oil and gas exploration in its draft Energy Strategy. The Cabinet Secretary's statement in Parliament appears to indicate a backwards shift in favour of new licences, if they can pass as yet undefined assessments.

It is clear that no new licences could pass a credible climate assessment: a proper climate test equates to no new North Sea projects. A large and credible body of research, including from the International Energy Agency (IEA) and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) makes clear that new oil and gas infrastructure and developments put the goal to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C at serious risk. The UK Committee on Climate Change [confirmed](#) that the expansion of fossil fuel production is not in line with the UK's net zero commitments and that while the UK will continue to need some oil and gas until it reaches Net Zero: "*this does not in itself justify the development of new North Sea fields*".

Recent months have seen heated debate over the future of the North Sea. The newly elected UK Government has committed to issue no new oil and gas licences for exploration and must work swiftly to enact this, while extending this position to include an end to all new oil and gas developments. While decisions on new licences are reserved to the UK

Government, the Scottish Government's position on this issue remains highly significant and we urge you to work constructively with the UK Government by adopting a position of no new licences and developments, and move on to focus on the urgent priority of managing a just transition.

The geological reality means the transition is unavoidable: the North Sea basin is mature and declining. The number of jobs supported by the oil and gas industry has more than [halved over the past decade](#), despite hundreds of new licences being issued in this period. Regarding energy security, issuing new licences [would only give us](#) one extra year's worth of gas between now and 2050 and around 80% of the UK's oil is exported overseas.

The Scottish and UK Governments must take this opportunity to come together to agree a coherent, credible plan to transition the North Sea and its workforce to renewable energy, as highlighted in a [recent letter](#) to party leaders from over 60 leading climate organisations and a [report](#) created in consultation with workers in the offshore oil and gas industry and backed by leading trade unions. The current voluntary North Sea Transition Deal, agreed between the previous UK Government and the industry, is failing. It has put oil and gas companies in the driving seat of the transition, and they have failed to prioritise the needs of workers, communities and supply chain companies. We cannot leave the market, and profit-driven oil and gas companies, to decide the speed of this transition when lives are on the line, particularly within international communities that are already facing the deep and spiralling impacts of a climate crisis they did least to fuel.

The transition to renewable energy is a major opportunity for investment in the future wellbeing of Scotland's economy and communities, including in the North East and Grangemouth. To earn the trust of workers and communities a new deal must be created with their involvement, get into the specifics of where and how opportunities will be created, backed up with investment, such as in the growth of decommissioning and wind turbine manufacturing industries. At the same time, we are clear in our support for the UK and Scottish Governments to urgently boost investment in appropriately situated renewable infrastructure, while ensuring communities benefit from this transition.

Our organisations stand ready to support the Scottish Government in calling on the UK Government for significant investment in Scotland's green transition and in securing and helping lead an urgent, inclusive new process, involving the Scottish Government, trade unions, workers and affected communities, for developing a coherent and fair plan for the North Sea transition and for the people of Scotland. However, we urge the Scottish Government to find common cause with us by demonstrating a renewed focus on the climate crisis and just transition by adopting a position of no new oil and gas licences.

Yours Sincerely,

Mike Robinson, Chair, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
 Caroline Rance, Campaigns Manager - Fossil Fuel Transition, Friends of the Earth Scotland
 Liz Murray, Head of Scottish Campaigns, Global Justice Now
 Lang Banks, Director, WWF Scotland
 Eva Gallova, People's Health Movement Scotland
 Aileen McLeod, Director, Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland
 Val Brown, Head of Christian Aid Scotland
 Anne McCall, Director, RSPB Scotland
 Tessa Khan, Founder and Executive Director, Uplift
 Shivali Fifiield, Chief Officer, Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland
 Claire Larkin, Co-founder and Director, Parents For Future Scotland
 Charles Millar, Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust
 Michael Hutchinson, Clerk, Quakers in Scotland
 Jamie Livingstone, Oxfam Scotland
 Jill Kent, Chairperson, Justice & Peace Scotland
 Laurie Macfarlane, Co-Director at Future Economy Scotland
 Alan Munro, Founder & Director, Young Sea Changers Scotland
 Phil Taylor, Director, Open Seas
 Hugo Tagholm, Executive Director, Oceana UK
 Gabrielle Jeliaskov, Organising and Advocacy Lead, Platform
 Frances Guy, Chief Executive, Scotland's International Development Alliance
 Calum Duncan, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Marine Conservation Society
 Stop Rosebank

