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**HOW CAN YOU SPEAK
TO YOUR MP
ABOUT OIL AND GAS
LICENSING?**



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Oil and Gas licensing: First, the good news

After a long while, and as the result of decades of tireless campaigning from people like you, it looks like the UK is finally - just about - beginning to turn the corner on oil and gas. Firstly, having run on a pledge to not offer any more licences for North Sea production, Labour in government are now in place to implement that. Secondly, the government has just announced that they will not be defending the controversial Rosebank and Jackdaw fields in upcoming judicial reviews brought by Greenpeace and Uplift. Although this doesn't mean that the licences for Rosebank and Jackdaw have been withdrawn, if the judicial review backs the environmental organisations this would produce additional delay and costs, as operators would need to resubmit environmental assessments. Greenpeace is citing this as a victory for their campaign, whilst the Conservative shadow energy secretary has called it a 'final blow for the north sea'.

The other news

So does this mean that the struggle against fossil fuels is over? We probably won't surprise you by saying that we don't think so - in fact, there are strong reasons to continue campaigning on these issues. Firstly, the government has stated that oil and gas will continue to play a role in the economy for decades to come, and indeed, the UK produced 715 thousand barrels of oil per day in 2022, and remains a major gas producing country. The government has also announced plans to consult later this year on its manifesto position not to issue new oil and gas licences to explore new fields - and we can predict that the fossil fuel industry will use this as an excuse to lobby for more extraction.

We know that, as the IEA has warned, there can be no new oil, gas or coal development if the world is to reach net zero by 2050. We need to end our reliance on existing fossil fuels as soon as possible in order to meet our net zero targets. The rest of this guide seeks to provide you with the analysis and tools needed to make a difference by talking to your MP about the future of oil and gas.





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The background to Oil and Gas Licensing

In order to have a productive conversation about Oil and Gas, it's helpful to know a little bit about how the licensing process works in the UK. Licences are awarded by the North Sea Transition Authority (NTSA), and split roughly into two categories: exploration and production. Exploration allows the licence holder to explore a specific area for fossil fuels, whereas Production entitles the licence holder to extract oil and gas. (Both Rosebank and Jackdaw have passed this stage). All of these stages are subject to multiple reviews and consultations, and so 'campaigning is important at every stage of the process'.

Alternative ways of framing the issue

A Just Transition

We know that we need to drastically shift away from our reliance on fossil fuels if we are to avoid potentially devastating climate destruction. To do this, we need to transition to a more sustainable way of living. And, to do this in a 'just' way is to do it in a way that's fair to everyone, including to those workers who are currently employed in polluting industries, such as oil and gas, which currently supports around 220,000 livelihoods in the UK. From the closure of Britain's coal-pits in the 80s, we know what happens when key industries are closed without adequate provision of re-employment: ex-mining communities are 'still scarred by the past' to this day.

In practice, this looks like trying to ensure that oil and gas workers are transferred to jobs which offer comparable terms of employment (e.g. pay, security, unionisation). Fortunately, moving to a green economy, if done well, can produce the scale of opportunities required: 1.8 million jobs in the UK alone, according to research from Greenpeace. Oil and gas workers often possess highly technical skills, which can often be transferred to green industries (such as renewables, electricity infrastructure and green transport.) Therefore one way of talking about a just transition to your MP is to emphasise that a move away from oil and gas requires a large investment in green technologies. You can see our resource on renewables for more information here.

At the same time, to effect this transition without risking livelihoods, the government needs to support workers by providing reskilling opportunities, incentivising pathways out of polluting industries and locating green industries in areas where the existing oil and gas workforce live. Shifting our entire energy mix away from fossil fuels won't be



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without complications, which is why we need to ensure that government is planning for a just transition from the earliest stage. One way to ensure this happens is to involve oil and gas workers themselves in designing their own transitions out of the industry.

Talking to your MP about a just transition is a way of highlighting how good environmental policies don't have to come at the expense of working communities, but can instead be part of a positive programme of improving ordinary people's lives whilst working to repair the planet.

Energy security:

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a new justification for oil and gas extraction emerged, with then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak talking about the need to 'max out' the north sea's fossil fuel reserves in order to secure 'energy security', understood as the UK's energy self-reliance in the face of geo-political turbulence. Whilst this framing has so far been beneficial for the oil and gas industries, it is also open to challenge. As parliamentary research has shown, "additional North Sea oil production would not have a substantial effect on energy security because 83% of UK oil is exported". And, 'North Sea production is much too small to influence these prices, so new production will not cut energy bills.' Finally, as a former COP26 president pointed out, 'the reality is, the oil and gas extracted from the North Sea is owned by private companies and therefore the government doesn't get to control who they sell to'.

As an alternative, a positive case for energy security can be made by advocating for a program of investing in renewables, increasing our capacity to store that energy, and improving energy efficiency by supporting things like home heating upgrades.

Talking to your MP about how the goals of energy security and sustainability don't have to be opposed, but instead work best when aligned, can help to undermine the arguments for increasing national fossil fuel production.

Remember, get creative! You should always try to research your MP beforehand and then tailor your approach to them. Approaching your MP through the issues they care about is the best way to have a constructive conversation about the issues you care about and will help you to create common ground.



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What can we do now?

Ending our role in adding more planet destroying carbon to the atmosphere lies at the heart of what it means to fight climate change. And whilst the government is now beginning to make steps in the right direction, this will only continue as long as ordinary people like you keep up the work of letting your representatives know why this matters.

You could ask your MP to oppose future oil and gas licences, including by submitting to the government's promised consultation on ending licensing outlining why issuing new licenses would not be in line with the UK's legally binding net-zero targets.

You could ask your MP to raise this issue in parliament, calling on ministers to increase funding to renewables/energy efficiency/renewable energy storage, or show how they plan to facilitate the necessary transition away from oil and gas whilst securing good jobs for workers currently employed in those industries.

The previous government's support for increased drilling in the north sea was perceived by many international observers as 'wrecking the United Kingdom's long-held claims to climate leadership'. The rhetoric of 'international climate leadership' has proven very influential of late, with Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, having talked about filling the "vacuum of leadership" on the global stage.

You can use this framing to speak to your MP about the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (BOGA), 'an international alliance of governments and stakeholders working together to facilitate the managed phase-out of oil and gas production.'

With members already including countries such as Denmark, Costa Rica, France, and Wales, you could ask your MP to campaign for the UK to sign up. On a more individual level, you could also ask that they personally read and sign the BOGA declaration.





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What can we do now?

Another key international treaty is the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, championed by governments in the global south to call for a fast and fair end to the era of coal, oil and gas. The UK campaign is being headed up by [Global Justice Now](#), who have produced three asks for MPs:

1. That they read the [MP briefing on the case for the Treaty](#)
2. That they sign [Early Day Motion 111 \(if they haven't already\)](#)
3. That they sign the [global parliamentarians' call for a fossil-free future](#)

Ending fossil fuel production is connected to all the other ways we can make our economy greener. For instance: if we use less gas to heat our houses, we'll rely less on north sea gas.

Therefore you could ask to meet your MP to discuss their support for a Government-led campaign to update our poorly insulated housing stock.

Whilst the specific issue of oil and gas licensing is overseen by the UK government, much of the support for the industry, such as logistics and just transition efforts, lie with the devolved assemblies. If you live outside of England, you could also engage with your devolved representatives, for instance by asking for them to sign your nation up to BOGA, like Wales has done, or to better support workers to get good green jobs. You can find out more information about meeting your MSP, MS, or MLA, and which topics its best to speak to them about on the [resource hub](#).



Through connected action across the UK, we can build a community that champions stronger government action on issues that matter most for people and the planet. If you want to get involved, reach out to the [Climate Coalition](#) and [Hope for the Future](#) today.

