

UK government takes next steps to boost domestic energy production

To bolster the UK's energy security, the UK government has today lifted the moratorium on shale gas production in England, and confirmed its support for a new oil and gas licensing round, expected to be launched by the North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) in early October.

In light of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and weaponisation of energy, the government is taking concrete steps to increase home-grown sources of energy, reduce the UK's reliance of foreign imports, and explore all possible options to boost domestic energy security. To do so, it is appropriate to pursue all means for increasing UK oil and gas production, including through new oil and gas licences and shale gas extraction.

Business and Energy Secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg said:

In light of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and weaponisation of energy, strengthening our energy security is an absolute priority, and – as the Prime Minister said – we are going to ensure the UK is a net energy exporter by 2040.

To get there we will need to explore all avenues available to us through solar, wind, oil and gas production – so it's right that we've lifted the pause to realise any potential sources of domestic gas.

The new licensing round is expected to lead to over 100 new licences, as [previously announced by the Prime Minister](#), forming part of the government's plans to accelerate domestic energy supply. Under the new licensing round, which follows the outcome of the Climate Compatibility Checkpoint, the NSTA is expected to make a number of new 'blocks' of the UK Continental Shelf available, for applicants to bid for licences.

These licences will enable developers to search for commercially viable oil and gas sources within the areas of their licences. Developers will still need to seek regulatory approval for any activities conducted within their licensed area, such as drilling or construction of infrastructure.

Increasing energy supplies with a new licensing round and lifting the moratorium on shale gas production will help boost the UK's energy resilience, and help achieve the ambition to make the UK a net energy exporter by 2040.

The government is today formally lifting the pause on shale gas extraction and will consider future applications for Hydraulic Fracturing Consent with the domestic and global need for gas in mind and where there is local support. Developers will need to have the necessary licences, permissions and

consents in place before they can commence operations.

The decision comes alongside the publication of the British Geological Survey's scientific review into shale gas extraction, which was [commissioned earlier this year](#). The review recognised that we have limited current understanding of UK geology and onshore shale resources, and the challenges of modelling geological activity in relatively complex geology sometimes found in UK shale locations.

There have only been three test wells which have been hydraulically fractured in the UK to date. It is clear that we need more sites drilled in order to gather better data and improve the evidence base and we are aware that some developers are keen to assist with this process.

Lifting the pause on shale gas extraction will enable drilling to gather this further data, building an understanding of UK shale gas resources and how we can safely carry out shale gas extraction in the UK where there is local support.

We are scaling up renewables, nuclear, and lower carbon energy sources, to boost Britain's energy security in the long term, and reduce our exposure to high fossil fuel prices set by global markets outside our control. However, there will continue to be ongoing demand for oil and gas over the coming years during this transition, with oil and gas needed to maintain the security of the UK's energy supply. Making the most of our own domestic resources under the North Sea will make us less dependent on foreign imports.

- The Written Ministerial Statement formally lifting the moratorium is available shortly (link to be added in when available).
- The government's support for the licensing round follows the introduction of the new [climate compatibility checkpoint](#) that opened in late 2021, the checkpoint is a new measure enabling ministers to review the awarding of new licences in light of the UK's climate change objectives.
- Read the [government response to the Climate Compatibility Checkpoint consultation](#).
- Also published today is the government's response to the [consultation](#) on the UK Offshore Energy Strategic Environmental Assessment 4 (OESEA4) Environmental Report. The government has taken account of the responses received during the consultation period in making the decision to adopt its draft plan/programme for licensing and leasing areas for future offshore energy developments. This will pave the way for future licensing or leasing for offshore oil and gas, offshore gas and carbon storage, offshore renewables, and offshore hydrogen, in relevant waters of the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS).
- The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process of appraisal through which environmental protection and sustainable development are considered and factored into decisions relating to government plans and programmes (such as those for offshore energy infrastructure). It is a statutory obligation designed to ensure that environmental factors are taken into account at the broader plan-making stage. Further [information on the Offshore Energy Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\) stages](#)

[and process is available here.](#)