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.

UK tech companies eye Singapore as gateway for regional expansion

21 September 2022, Singapore – This week Singapore hosts a major delegation of 24 cutting-edge British companies exploring growth opportunities in Asia Pacific. They work on diverse projects including driverless vehicles, lawtech, cybersecurity and deeptech.

They are spending a week in Singapore hosted by the British High Commission and will engage with Singapore Government agencies including the Cyber Security Agency; Defence Science and Technology Agency; GovTech; the Infocomm Media Development Authority and the Ministry of Law.

These activities form the first UK-Singapore Digital Economy Dialogue, a forum to promote the benefits of digital trade, deepen our partnerships at both the government and business levels, and ensure that regulation keeps up with the pace of innovation.

The visiting companies intend to use the all-new UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement (DEA) to support their expansion into Asia Pacific.

The DEA is the most innovative trade agreement in the world, and is the first Digital Economy Agreement between a European nation and an Asian one. UK-Singapore trade is already worth over £17bn per year.

Tech Nation, the UK's leading growth platform for tech companies, is co-leading this week by organising a delegation and creating a programme of 90 meetings with corporate partners and investors.

Lawtech: a bright spot for future growth

Ten lawtech companies are visiting Singapore from the UK to explore business opportunities in Asia Pacific.

'Lawtech' is commonly used to describe technologies that support, supplement or replace traditional methods for the delivery of legal services or legal transactions by law practice entities or lawyers.

The UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement is the first trade agreement in the world to contain specific commitments on lawtech. The UK's lawtech sector is valued at £11.4bn, according to Tech Nation research. The UK has the largest legal services market in Europe – and is second globally only to the US.

The DEA brings together two leading nations on legal services, and will help firms identify collaboration opportunities in both markets more easily.

It has specific provisions that promote electronic contracts and signatures; secure international data flows; and ensure protection of key proprietary information.

The DEA gives businesses greater confidence and assurance about the rules of the road when it comes to trading digitally between the UK and Singapore, both now and in the future.

Kara Owen, British High Commissioner to Singapore said:

> I am excited to host 24 UK tech companies at the British High Commission, Singapore. They are keen to use the all-new UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement to support their expansion into Singapore and the region.
>
> The agreement is a marker of our ambition to break down trade barriers in areas including lawtech, data flows and cyber security. UK-Singapore trade is already worth over £17 billion per year, and this is only set to grow.

Natalie Black, His Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Asia Pacific said:

> I am delighted to welcome a cohort of cutting-edge UK tech companies to Singapore to meet new partners, customers and investors and identify growth opportunities in the region.
>
> Singapore is a gateway to the rest of Southeast Asia, which has a digital economy projected to reach $1 trillion by 2030. The region has the demographics and openness that scaleups are looking for.
>
> Our UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement will make the most of this opportunity – bringing together two high tech nations in a living agreement that keeps up with the pace of digital innovation.

Gabriel Lim, Permanent Secretary (Trade and Industry), Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore Government, said:

> We welcome the visit of UK tech startups to Singapore, in conjunction with the inaugural Digital Economy Dialogue under the UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement. This is an opportunity to bring together industry stakeholders to explore how we can leverage this cutting-edge agreement and help our businesses, especially startups and SMEs, to seize new growth opportunities across our combined and growing digital markets.

Samantha Evans, Director of International at Tech Nation said:

> Tech Nation are thrilled to be bringing the third cohort of leading UK tech companies on our International Growth Programme to Singapore. While here, the companies will be meeting with over 90 corporates and investors as they look for partnerships and opportunities to land and expand into this exciting market.
>
> As part of the UK government's Digital Trade Network, we have already supported over 300 UK tech scaleups derisk and accelerate their growth into Asia Pacific – with the majority looking to scale into Singapore first.
>
> Given the demand from British tech to grow into this region, we look forward to continuing our work with the UK and Singaporean governments to support even more scaleups with their success here.

Homes England launches new development finance fund

Homes England, alongside Greater Manchester Pension Fund, listed wealth manager Mattioli Woods and other private institutional investors, have committed £80m to the Initial Close of the Newstead SME Real Estate Lending Fund (RELF).

The Fund is to be managed by specialist fund manager Newstead Capital and the intention is to grow the fund to £300m in subsequent capital raised and deliver £1bn of funding over the Fund's lifetime.

The Fund will help to meet Homes England's mission to accelerate change in the housing market by bringing in new sources of institutional capital and diversifying lending channels to the SME housebuilding sector, whilst enabling the construction of over 5,000 high-quality, affordably priced, and efficient new homes throughout England.

> Peter Denton, chief executive of Homes England, said: "This partnership is our latest intervention to offer SME housebuilders a route to finance that may otherwise be unavailable through traditional means.
>
> Introducing new sources of institutional capital to support SME house builders is a priority for Homes England and our cornerstone

> investment in this fund signals government support for accessible and competitive finance to meet the needs of SME developers across the country.
>
> We look forward to working with our new partners and welcome further institutional capital to help grow this fund and give SME housebuilders the helping hand they need to get more quality homes built in our regions.

By empowering smaller regional housebuilders, the Fund will help to encourage the creation of sympathetic and environmentally responsible projects while supporting the regional SME house building sector and boosting regional job creation.

> Councillor Ged Cooney, Chair of Greater Manchester Pension Fund, said: “We are pleased to support the Newstead residential RELF, which will allow more new homes to be built, by empowering local SME builders to develop smaller sites, often overlooked by larger housebuilders.
>
> These new homes will help to address the housing shortage and the financial return from our investment will enable GMPF to meet its future pension obligations to its members.

The Fund employs a robust underwriting process overseen by Newstead, incorporating its own credit, environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics and will encourage the development of sustainable housing by taking new homes’ energy efficiency into account at the underwriting stage.

> Simon Champ, CEO at Newstead Capital, said: “This is an exciting step for Newstead. Our fund is the first of its kind. We are providing a conduit for long term institutional investors to gain access to a market which until now has been out of reach.
>
> The Newstead RELF is aimed exclusively at the unfulfilled need for capital from regional housebuilders. Regional housebuilding has historically been critical to the economy, providing the country with a diverse range of smaller housing communities. The fund gives pension, insurance, and wealth management institutions an appropriate long term investment platform to support this vital industry.
>
> By meeting this demand, we will provide an attractive return for investors, the taxpayer and Manchester retirees, while also empowering local SME builders to compete with larger housebuilders. The Newstead RELF fund will allow more new homes to be built, tackling the housing shortage and contributing to levelling up by allowing smaller sites to be developed, with the associated environmental benefits.

British High Commissioner inaugurates two learning centres for disadvantaged children

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Chatterton Dickson has inaugurated two learning centres in Narsingdi on 21 September 2022 under the Educate the Most Disadvantaged Children (EMDC) programme funded by the British High Commission in Dhaka and implemented by UNICEF.

The objective of the programme is to provide increased opportunities for education to some of the most disadvantaged children, especially girls, and to enhance their foundational learning. The project directly helps to overcome education challenges in Bangladesh by supporting out-of-school children living in hard-to-reach areas such as urban slums, coastal areas, hill tracts and wetlands.

A total of 1,300 learning centres will provide catch-up education to children who dropped out (or are at risk of dropping out) due to the COVID pandemic; and multi-grade multi-level education for children who were never previously enrolled in school.

British High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickson said

“Education is a fundamental human right and critical for the development of a country. The UK government is pleased to be able to provide these flexible learning opportunities for out-of-school children to minimise the learning gap and help build back after the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of their course these children will be integrated into mainstream government schools to continue their education.”

UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh Mr Sheldon Yett, who also visited the learning centres, said

“Despite increased enrolment of both girls and boys, millions of children in Bangladesh remain out of school. This partnership with the UK Government is a boost to UNICEF’s efforts to bring quality education to children who would otherwise be missing out.”

The UK Government has pledged 38.5 million pounds for the Educate the Most Disadvantaged Children (EMDC) programme in Bangladesh which will be implemented over eight years. The programme aims to provide education to 360,000 marginalised children, including over 210,000 girls across Bangladesh.

Further information

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[PM meeting with President Tayyip Erdoğan: 21 September 2022]()

Press release

The Prime Minister met the President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the UN General Assembly on 21 September.

The Prime Minister met the President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the UN General Assembly on 21 September.

Their discussions focused on the conflict in Ukraine, including the impact of recent Ukrainian territorial gains and success in pushing back the Russian invasion. The Prime Minister said the message was clear – Kyiv can and will win, and the international community must support Ukrainian sovereignty.

The Prime Minister congratulated President Erdoğan on his role in securing vital grain exports through the Black Sea, and support for critical NATO enlargement in the face of new threats.

The Prime Minister also welcomed the deepening of UK-Turkish bilateral ties in recent years, including a substantial increase in trade and investment and new defence cooperation.

The leaders discussed opportunities to further develop the partnership between our countries in clean energy, including nuclear power, and cutting-edge defence technology and trade.

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