



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Councillor Spencer Flower
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The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP
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Dear Cllr Flower,

Thank you for your letter dated 29 April, regarding the UK's energy self-sufficiency and climate change.

I would first like to assure you that we have achieved a lot on our road to net zero already. Between 1990 and 2019 we have grown our economy by more than three-quarters. At the same time, we have cut greenhouse emissions by over 40%, faster than any other country in the G7.

Since November 2020, we have published the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the Energy White Paper, the North Sea Transition Deal, the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the Hydrogen Strategy, our Heat and Buildings Strategy, the Net Zero Strategy and, most recently, the British Energy Security Strategy.

Our Net Zero Strategy delivers a comprehensive set of measures to support and capitalise on the UK's transition to net zero by 2050. It sets out how we will end our domestic contribution to climate change with a UK-wide approach where 'green' and 'growth' go hand in hand.

It is a cross-economy strategy which keeps us on our path to net zero, including the action we will take to keep us on track for meeting carbon budgets and our 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution.

The recently published Energy Security Strategy accelerates this plan, in a series of bold commitments which put Great Britain at the leading edge of the global energy revolution. It will deliver a more independent, more secure energy system and support consumers to manage their energy bills.

With regards to the point you raise on reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, the UK still needs oil and gas for heating, cooking, transport, to power its industries, and as a key part of Great Britain's electricity generation during the energy transition.

Currently around half of the UK's demand for gas is met through domestic supplies; however, the UK Continental Shelf is a mature oil and gas basin, where production is naturally declining. In meeting net zero, the UK's use of both these fuels is also set to reduce significantly; it is likely that the UK will see its gas consumption reduce by over 40 per cent by 2030, and by 2050 it may be using just a quarter of the gas that it uses now.

The Government will introduce a climate compatibility checkpoint, which will be used to assess whether any future licensing rounds remain in keeping with the UK's climate goals. The UK is also working to reduce the emissions of its offshore oil and gas further, by driving rapid industry investment in electrifying offshore production.

A gradual decline in oil and gas production does not mean a decline for the UK's offshore industries. The North Sea will still be a foundation of the UK's energy security in decades to come, although focussed on an increasingly wide range of new low-carbon energy technologies including carbon capture usage and storage, offshore wind and hydrogen production.

As outlined in the British Energy Security Strategy on 7 April, this focus on low-carbon technologies will include bold new commitments to supercharge clean energy and accelerate deployment, which could see 95% of Great Britain's electricity set to be low carbon by 2030, including:

- Offshore wind: A new ambition of up to 50GW by 2030 – more than enough to power every home in the UK – of which we would like to see up to 5GW from floating offshore wind in deeper seas. This will be underpinned by new planning reforms to cut the approval times for new offshore wind farms from up to 4 years to 1 year and an overall streamlining which will radically reduce the time it takes for new projects to reach construction stages while improving the environment.
- Onshore wind: We will be consulting on developing partnerships with a limited number of supportive communities who wish to host new onshore wind infrastructure in return for guaranteed lower energy bills.
- Solar: We will also look to increase the UK's current 14GW of solar capacity which could grow up to 5 times by 2035, consulting on the planning rules for solar projects, particularly on domestic and commercial rooftops, as well as aggressively exploring other renewable opportunities afforded by our geography and geology, including tidal and geothermal.

This will be supported by the UK's main mechanism for supporting large scale low-carbon generation, the Contracts for Difference Scheme (CfD). Our latest round is our largest ever, supporting an expanded number of renewable technologies. In February, we also announced that the next CfD round will be brought forward to March 2023, and future rounds will run annually, rather than every two years, helping to drive deployment of renewable power.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Yours ever

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'GH', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

THE RT HON GREG HANDS MP
Minister of State for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change