



UK Health Alliance
on Climate Change

Neil Gray MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Copied to: Gillian Martin MSP
Acting Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy

23 May 2025

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

We write to you as health leaders deeply concerned about the impacts of climate change on health and our health service that will be worsened by any new oil and gas fields in the UK.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared climate change to be the major threat to global health, and the risks become more severe with each increment of a degree in global heating. The climate emergency is a health emergency.

We have spoken out repeatedly about the need to transition away from fossil fuels and our concerns about Rosebank and Jackdaw. We welcome the recent court ruling that deemed approval for the Rosebank and Jackdaw oilfields unlawful due to the failure to consider the significant climate harm associated with the emissions that would be produced from burning the oil and gas.

These oil and gas fields in the UK would be at odds with the UK Government's commitment to deliver clean power by 2030 and the NHS Scotland improvement plan's focus on prevention.

We urge you, as Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, to speak out against consent for the Rosebank and Jackdaw oilfields due to the significant health risks they pose, both for the UK and global populations.

The health impacts of burning fossil fuels are already being seen, from increasing risk of pregnancy complications and increasing incidence of children with asthma, to greater risk of stroke, acute kidney injury, and premature death in older adults. We are also seeing the wider impact of climate change on the health system. Recent polling has found that almost half of UK health workers have already experienced NHS services being disrupted because of extreme weather and more than two thirds have been unable to get to work because of extreme weather. The Scottish Climate Survey found that almost three quarters of people in Scotland feel climate change is an immediate and urgent problem, and almost all households have experienced an extreme weather event in the previous 12 months.

Our health systems will see increasing patient demand as a consequence of climate change risk factors, and our health infrastructure is at risk from over-heating, flooding and other unpredictable extreme weather events.

We must do all we can to tackle climate change to protect the nation's health and the NHS.

We welcome the UK Government's pledge to cut carbon emissions by 81% by 2035 consistent with the Paris target and Scotland's ambition to be net zero by 2045. This must now be backed up by demonstrating the action needed to deliver.

The UK also has a global obligation to account for cumulative emissions and historical contributions by cutting emissions more rapidly and to meet commitments made at COP28 to transition away from fossil fuels. If the UK consents to new fields, it both weakens its diplomatic standing and threatens the health of millions.

We have enclosed our recent policy report [A Just Transition for the Good of Health](#) which outlines the health risks of fossil fuel dependency and the significant benefits for health that will flow from a just transition to clean energy.

We welcome any opportunity to meet with you to discuss our concerns and the potential for positive action in transitioning our energy system to deliver better health outcomes. We would be happy to coordinate a meeting of health leaders from different specialties.

Kind regards,

Richard Smith CBE FMedSci, Chair UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
Elaine Mulcahy, Director UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
Rachel Armitage, Managing Director, Nursing Standard, RCNi
Dr Shireen Kassam, Plant-Based Health Professionals UK
Prof Hugh Montgomery, Professor of Intensive Care Medicine, UCL
Prof Mike Wang, Emeritus Professor of Clinical Psychology
Sarah Mistry, CEO, British Geriatrics Society
Dr James Lee, Director Planetary Health Report Card
Dr Janet Barter, President, Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare
Professor Rich Withnall, CEO, The Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management
Dr Raneen Thakar, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
Professor Kamila Hawthorne, Chair of RCGP Council
Dr Trudi Seneviratne, Registrar, Royal College of Psychiatrists
Professor Claire Anderson, President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Dr Katrina Davies, GP and director of Greener Practice CIC
Dr Helena Clements, Officer for Climate Change, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Dr Latifa Patel, BMA, Chair of Representative Body
Patricia Marquis, Director, RCN England
Dr Alexander Rhys, CEO, Infection Prevention Society
Ron Cullen, CEO, UK Kidney Association
Professor Kevin Fenton, President, Faculty of Public Health
Dr James Price, Secretary, Healthcare Infection Society
Prof David Werring, President, British and Irish Association of Stroke Physicians

Professor Hany Eteiba, President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow

Dr Zahra Shehabi, Sustainability Working Group Chair, The Association of Dental Hospitals

Professor André Ng, President, British Cardiovascular Society