# Green Party leader leads protests against Rosebank oil development amid climate backlash



Zack Polanski, leader of the Green Party, has led a protest outside the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, urging the UK government to halt development plans for the Rosebank oil field. Polanski emphasised that the true solutions to energy and environmental challenges lie in investing in green industries and community initiatives, rather than supporting large infrastructure projects that primarily benefit wealthy corporations. According to him, such projects only enrich multi-millionaires and billionaires while failing to address broader community needs.

The Rosebank oil field, situated approximately 80 miles west of Shetland, is the largest untapped oil reserve in the UK, with estimates suggesting it contains up to 300 million barrels of oil. Its development, initially approved by the Conservative government in 2023, has faced significant opposition and legal challenges, including a Supreme Court ruling that mandated the consideration of emissions from fossil fuel burning when granting drilling permissions. This has added complexity to the project’s future, amid rising environmental concerns.

Campaigners across the UK have been vocal in their opposition. Around 20 activists gathered at the parliamentary office in Lerwick, Shetland, calling on Prime Minister Keir Starmer to reject the Rosebank development. This protest was part of a larger, coordinated action nationwide against the project. In London, over 200 climate activists gathered outside the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, with Polanski addressing the crowd to highlight the pressing need to leave fossil fuels underground and pivot towards renewable energy sources.

Leading figures in the Scottish Green Party have strongly criticised the development. Gillian Mackay, co-leader of the Scottish Greens, condemned the project as "pure climate vandalism" at the party’s conference, emphasising both its environmental impact and the necessity to challenge polluter narratives. Similarly, Scottish Greens Co-Leader Lorna Slater branded the Rosebank development as "immoral and unlawful," underscoring its contradiction with efforts to tackle the climate emergency and advocating for a just transition to renewables.

The project has been granted consent by the North Sea Transition Authority to owners Equinor and Ithaca Energy despite vocal opposition from environmentalists, including international figures like Greta Thunberg. The Rosebank field, now one of the largest untapped oil discoveries in UK waters, is estimated to hold up to 350 million barrels of oil, according to some estimates. This discrepancy in projections highlights ongoing debates about the scale and impact of the site.

While the UK Government’s approval reflects a balancing act between economic interests and energy security, critics argue that proceeding with the Rosebank development undermines commitments to net zero and environmental protection. They call for a redirection of investments into sustainable industries and communities, rejecting what they see as projects that disproportionately benefit the wealthy and exacerbate climate risks.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/zack-polanski-rosebank-oil-field-protest-b1253632.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/zack-polanski-rosebank-oil-field-protest-b1253632.html), [[5]](https://www.thejournal.ie/protest-oilfield-rosebank-london-6183444-Sep2023/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/zack-polanski-rosebank-oil-field-protest-b1253632.html), [[4]](https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2025/09/07/protesters-call-for-stop-to-rosebank-development/), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-09-27/campaigners-angered-as-rosebank-oil-field-worth-billions-gets-go-head)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2025/09/07/protesters-call-for-stop-to-rosebank-development/), [[5]](https://www.thejournal.ie/protest-oilfield-rosebank-london-6183444-Sep2023/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/uk-government-north-sea-edinburgh-labour-party-b1253639.html), [[7]](https://greens.scot/news/rosebank-development-would-be-immoral-and-unlawful)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-09-27/campaigners-angered-as-rosebank-oil-field-worth-billions-gets-go-head), [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/zack-polanski-rosebank-oil-field-protest-b1253632.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/zack-polanski-rosebank-oil-field-protest-b1253632.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/zack-polanski-rosebank-oil-field-protest-b1253632.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/zack-polanski-rosebank-oil-field-protest-b1253632.html> - Zack Polanski, leader of the Green Party, led a protest outside the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, demanding the UK government halt plans to drill in the Rosebank oil field. He advocated for investment in green industries and community initiatives, criticising large infrastructure projects that benefit wealthy corporations. The Rosebank field, located 80 miles west of Shetland, is the UK's largest untapped oil reserve, estimated to contain up to 300 million barrels of oil. Development was approved by the Conservative government in 2023 but faced challenges following a Supreme Court ruling requiring consideration of emissions from burning fossil fuels when granting new drilling permissions.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/uk-government-north-sea-edinburgh-labour-party-b1253639.html> - Scottish Green Party co-leader Gillian Mackay condemned plans to develop the Rosebank oil field as 'pure climate vandalism'. Speaking at the Scottish Green Party conference, she criticised the development, highlighting its environmental impact and the need to challenge the narratives of major polluters. The Rosebank field, estimated to contain up to 300 million barrels of oil, has been submitted for development by owners Equinor, despite environmental concerns.
4. <https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2025/09/07/protesters-call-for-stop-to-rosebank-development/> - Approximately 20 activists protested outside the parliamentary office in Lerwick, Shetland, calling on Prime Minister Keir Starmer to reject the Rosebank oil field development. The protest was part of a coordinated UK-wide action against the UK's largest untapped oil field. The development received a licence under the Conservative government but is now subject to additional environmental assessments following a successful legal challenge.
5. <https://www.thejournal.ie/protest-oilfield-rosebank-london-6183444-Sep2023/> - Over 200 climate activists protested in London against the approval of the Rosebank oil field development. Demonstrators gathered outside the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, chanting and holding banners condemning the scheme. Green Party deputy leader Zack Polanski addressed the crowd, emphasising the need to keep fossil fuels in the ground and advocating for a future based on renewable energy.
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-09-27/campaigners-angered-as-rosebank-oil-field-worth-billions-gets-go-head> - Environmental campaigners, including Greta Thunberg, expressed strong opposition to the approval of the Rosebank oil field development. The North Sea Transition Authority granted consent to owners Equinor and Ithaca Energy, despite environmental concerns. The Rosebank field, located northwest of Shetland, is one of the largest untapped oil discoveries in UK waters, containing up to 350 million barrels of oil.
7. <https://greens.scot/news/rosebank-development-would-be-immoral-and-unlawful> - Scottish Greens Co-Leader Lorna Slater described the proposed Rosebank oil field development as 'immoral and unlawful'. She highlighted the environmental risks and the incompatibility of the project with addressing the climate emergency. The Scottish Greens have been actively opposing the development, advocating for a just transition to renewable energy and challenging the legality of the project.