# Labour leader defends stance on oil and gas exploration amidst job loss concerns in the North Sea



Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has defended his party's stance on oil and gas exploration, addressing claims that it could result in job losses in the North Sea region. During the election campaign, Labour announced it would not issue new licenses for oil and gas exploration if it wins the election on July 4, though existing licenses would not be revoked. Starmer assured that oil and gas would be part of the UK energy mix for decades, emphasizing a planned and just transition to renewable energy sources which he believes could create more jobs in Scotland.

Starmer compared the current situation to the coal industry's decline during Margaret Thatcher's premiership, stressing the importance of planning for the future to avoid similar job losses. He also highlighted Labour's pledge to establish Great British Energy (GB Energy), a state-owned investment vehicle aimed at accelerating the transition to clean energy. GB Energy would be headquartered in Scotland and is projected to be funded with £8 billion of public money, intended to trigger further private investment.

Labour envisions the initiative creating tens of thousands of new jobs, particularly in renewable energy sectors like wind, solar, hydrogen, and carbon capture. However, the SNP voiced concerns, with SNP deputy leader Kate Forbes suggesting the policy could jeopardize 100,000 jobs in Scotland's north-east. The Scottish Conservatives have also criticized the plans, arguing that abandoning oil and gas exploration would harm the economy.

Former chief scientific adviser Sir Patrick Vallance supported Labour's energy policy, identifying a need for urgent action akin to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak dismissed Labour's energy plan as "just a logo," arguing it lacks substance and would fail to enhance the UK's energy security.

Starmer also addressed criticism over using a private jet for his campaign travels, defending it as the most efficient means to cover multiple campaign locations swiftly.

The Labour campaign continues ahead of the July 4 election, promoting a decade of national renewal with promises to cut bills, boost pay, and protect the NHS, aiming to secure broad voter support across Scotland and the UK.