# SNP First Minister John Swinney Announces Review of Policy on North Sea Oil and Gas Exploration



Scottish National Party (SNP) First Minister John Swinney has announced a review of the SNP's policy against further North Sea oil and gas exploration. Previously, the party, under Nicola Sturgeon and Humza Yousaf, opposed new oil and gas licensing as part of a draft energy strategy aimed at transitioning to net zero emissions. The SNP's stance contrasts with the Labour Party's firm opposition to new oil and gas fields if elected, echoed by Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer.

However, recent speculation has suggested that the SNP might soften its position to gain favor with voters reliant on the oil and gas sector. Swinney confirmed the policy review during an interview in Aberdeen, emphasizing the need for the sector's sustainability and its contribution to energy security and the net zero transition.

The review comes amid criticism from the Conservative Party, with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak asserting that only the Conservatives will consistently support the North Sea industry. The Scottish Conservatives have maintained this position, accusing the SNP of inconsistency and harming the sector.

SNP Westminster leader Stephen Flynn hinted at a policy shift, acknowledging the sector's importance to Scotland's economy and net zero goals. Current Net Zero and Energy Secretary Mairi McAllan also suggested that Labour's position on oil and gas exploration was too extreme.

Criticism of the SNP's policy review has come from various quarters. Conservative candidate Andrew Bowie labeled it an attempt to mislead voters, while Flynn accused the Tories of political opportunism in opposing Low Emission Zones (LEZ) in cities like Aberdeen, which have been protested by locals. Flynn defended the LEZ as necessary for air quality and environmental goals.

John Swinney also criticized the Conservative and Labour "tax grabs" on the oil and gas industry, warning they could negatively impact employment in the sector. He reiterated the SNP's commitment to fiscal sustainability while managing the transition to net zero.

The review forms part of the SNP's broader campaign strategies as Swinney urges voters to support the SNP in the forthcoming general election, emphasizing independence and local decision-making as solutions to austerity, Brexit, and the cost-of-living crisis.