



19 August 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

Congratulations on your re-election to parliament and welcome to your new role as Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

We are writing as organisations and individuals united behind a shared goal of protecting our seas and iconic marine wildlife from the damage caused by oil and gas production.

Notwithstanding the contribution to the climate crisis, oil and gas exploration and production cause significant harm including deafening underwater noise, oil and chemical pollution and direct loss of habitats on the seafloor. The science is clear that a healthy ocean is essential for addressing the climate crisis and restoring nature. We therefore welcome the government's commitment to end new licences, which is a critical first step, and look forward to working with you to see this implemented in full.

We would like to draw your attention to legal action which has been initiated by Oceana, challenging the [31 additional new oil and gas licences announced on 3rd May](#). Over one third of the licences overlap with Marine Protected Areas, where the public expect marine life to be safe to thrive. Oceana believes that the licences were approved unlawfully by the previous government, following inadequate assessments of the impacts of the licences on the marine environment. As an Alliance, we support this argument.

As the new Secretary of State, you now have the power to accept Oceana's case and withdraw the licences. The alternative is to face defending the previous government's decision to grant these damaging and unlawful licences in the courts.

Now that legal action has been commenced, the High Court will move to determine the lawfulness of the process for awarding the licences. By conceding the case, the government can make good on promises made to the public and signal a clear departure from the previous administration's continuing reliance on fossil fuels. You do not need to defend the actions of the previous government.

Your personal dedication to addressing the climate and nature crisis is without doubt, and you now have an opportunity to demonstrate your political will. Please act now and bring an end to unnecessary and unlawful new oil and gas licences to protect the ocean so that it can protect us.

With kind regards,

Hugo Tagholm, Executive Director, Oceana UK

Steve Trent, CEO and Founder, Environmental Justice Foundation

Tim Smit, Executive Vice-Chair and Co-Founder, Eden Project

Leanne Cullen-Unsworth, Chief Executive Officer and Charity Co-Founder, Project Seagrass

Demi Taylor, Director, London Surf Film Festival

Steve England, Editor, Carve Magazine

Matt Barnes, Director and Founder, Yorkshire Seal Group

Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Dan Jarvis, Director of Welfare and Conservation, British Divers Marine Life Rescue

Florence Garabedian, Interim CEO, Friends of the Earth Scotland

Dr Ben Sturgeon, CEO, Crustacean Compassion

Jamie Cook, CEO, Angling Trust

Rebecca Wrigley, Chief Executive, Rewilding Britain

Sophie Lewis, CEO, World Cetacean Alliance

Will McCallum, Co-Executive Director, Greenpeace UK

Will Kinchin, Founder and Director, Will Works

Maya Mailer, Co-founder, Mothers Rise Up

Simon Tilley, Director, Hockerton Housing Project

Dale Unnuk, Director and Head Coach, Big Green Adventures

David Hillman, Director, Stamp Out Poverty