Business Support Team
Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning
By email: OPRED@Energysecurity.gov.uk

20 November 2025

Representation from the Weald Action Group regarding the Rosebank Oilfield Development Project (reference: ES/2022/001)

The Weald Action Group[1] is a collaboration of community groups and campaigners against all forms of oil and gas extraction across the Weald and the south-east of England.

We, with Sarah Finch as the claimant, initiated the judicial review of the Horse Hill onshore oil development, (Finch v. Surrey County Council ('*Finch*'),[2] which led to the June 2024 Supreme Court judgment on the requirement to include downstream scope 3 impacts in environmental assessment for fossil fuel developments.

It was as a direct result of our success that the Court of Session ruled that the previous consent for the Rosebank development was unlawful, and that Equinor and Ithaca Energy have had to submit new further information regarding an assessment of the climate effects of scope 3 emissions. We welcome this further opportunity to comment on this project.

Overview

The latest Global Carbon Project budget shows that CO_2 emissions from fossil fuels will reach record highs of 31.8 gigatonnes (Gt) this year and that the remaining carbon budget to have just a 50% chance of limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5°C – 170 Gt CO_2, equating to just four years of today's emissions – is virtually exhausted[3].

This budget is dwarfed by the 915 Gt CO_2 forecasted emissions from the burning of the oil, gas and coal in already operating or under development fossil fuel-producing infrastructure. Indeed, under the Paris Agreement aligned emissions pathways, research shows that close to 60% of fossil fuels in active fields and mines must now remain in the ground[4].

[1] https://www.wealdactiongroup.org.uk/

[2] R (on the application of Finch on behalf of the Weald Action Group) v Surrey County Council and others [2024] UKSC 20. https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2022-0064

[3] Global Carbon Project. (2025). Supplemental data of Global Carbon Budget 2025 (Version 1.0) [Data set]. https://www.icos-cp.eu/science-and-impact/global-carbon-budget/2025 as reported here: Zeke Hausfather and Perre Friedlingstein, 'Fossil-fuel CO_2 emissions to set new record in 2025, as land sink "recovers"', *Carbon Brief*, 13 Nov. 2025. https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-fossil-fuel-co2-emissions-to-set-new-record-in-2025-as-land-sink-recovers/

[4] Oil Change International, *Sky's Limit Data Update*, 2023, https://www.oilchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/skys-limit-data-update-2023-v3.pdf

The science is clear[5]. If we are to have even the slightest chance of avoiding the very worst impacts of climate change there can be no new fossil fuel developments.

And we now have an authoritative legal opinion regarding the obligations of states in respect of climate change. Earlier this year the International Court of Justice[6] confirmed that the duty of States to prevent activities from causing significant harm to the environment and to act with due diligence applied to the climate system. Failure to prevent such activities – such as through the continued allowance of fossil fuel exploration, production, consumption or subsidies – may constitute an internationally wrongful act.

If the Rosebank oilfield development goes ahead it will cause significant harm to the climate system. There can be no doubt. The UK government must act with due diligence. It must not approve this development. To do otherwise ignores the scientific consensus that new fossil fuel projects are incompatible with the 1.5°C target, runs counter to the government's new objective for the North Sea, "*to take a globally standard-setting, 1.5°C and climate science-aligned approach to future oil and gas production*"[7] and puts the UK at legal risk.

Equinor's attempt to show that the Rosebank oilfield development will not cause significant harm to the climate is deplorable. This is discussed in the following section.

Specific comments on the further information provided by Equinor regarding its assessment of the effects of the Rosebank Development's Downstream Scope 3 Emissions on the climate[8]

1. Failure to acknowledge the critical state of the climate

- As per the government's EIA scope 3 supplementary guidance,[9] determination of the baseline should include "*A realistic and reasonable description of the current state of the environment*". Equinor fails to do this.
- For example, their assessment includes statements such as, "*Global climate systems have responded to the increase in CO_2 emissions through an increased uptake of CO_2 within the oceanic and terrestrial environments e.g. carbon sinks*" (para. 1.4.7). This is simplistic and

[5] E.g. *Navigating Energy Transitions Mapping the road to 1.5°C*, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2022. https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2022-10/navigating-energy-transitions-mapping-road-to-1.5.pdf; Greg Muttitt, Fergus Green and Steve Pye, *The Climate Implications of New Oil and Gas Fields in the UK – An overview of the evidence*, UCL, June 2025. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/policy-lab/sites/policy_lab/files/report-climate_implications_pages_online.pdf

[6] International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change, 7 July 2025. https://www.icj-cij.org/case/187

[7] Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, B*uilding the North Sea's Energy Future: Consultation*, March 2025. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67d0005ed107f3a16e028796/building-the-north-sea-energy-future-consultation.pdf

[8] Equinor, *Response to Requirement #1 (An assessment of the effects of downstream scope 3 emissions from the above project on climate) of the Regulation 12(1), Notice dated 21 July 2025*, 2025. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68ef61fd82670806f9d5e0a9/Rosebank_Reg_12__1__Assessment_of_Scope_3_Emissions__OPRED_131025__errors_corrected.pdf

[9] Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – Assessing effects of downstream scope 3 emissions on climate*, June 2025. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6853fa3d1203c00468ba2b15/Supplementary_guidance_-_Effects_of_Scope_3_Emissions.pdf

misleading. Due to our warming planet, natural carbon sinks – the forests, soils and oceans – are taking up fewer emissions than expected and are now reaching critical limits[10].

- Para. 3.2.12 states, "*Forster et al. (2025) estimate that from the beginning of 2025, the remaining carbon budget to maintain warming levels to below 1.5°C with >50% probability is 130 GtCO2eq*". Equinor does not contextualise this stark warning. 130 Gt CO_2eq equates to just three years of emissions at current levels[11].
- Equinor acknowledges that, "*These [emissions] trends indicate that atmospheric concentrations of CO_2, CH_4 and N_2O are increasing"* (p3.3.2). Several emission scenarios (Shared Socio-economic Pathway (SSP) narratives combined with Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs)) are then presented (Table 4, page 24) but there is no indication regarding which scenario the global emissions trajectory is currently broadly in line with.
- Indeed, the latest analysis of existing climate change policies of 40 governments by Climate Action Tracker shows that the world is currently on track for around 2.6°C of warming by 2100[12]. This level of warming is broadly in line with the SSP2-4.5 (Intermediate Emissions) scenario (see Table 4, page 24) which is blatantly not Paris Agreement aligned.
- Specifically, it is currently highly unlikely that the combustion (scope 3) emissions from oil produced from the Rosebank field would be released in countries which have 1.5°C aligned NDC targets. Equinor has said previously that the most likely destination for any oil produced from the development would be the continent of Europe[13]. According to Climate Action Tracker the EU's latest 2035 NDC (submitted this month) is not 1.5°C aligned and neither does it represent the EU's fair share of responsibility to fight climate change[14]. The approval of Rosebank would therefore constitute a direct and knowing contribution to an energy market in countries that are failing to meet their Paris Agreement commitments.

2. Evaluating the significance of the likely effects on the climate

2.1 Faulty assessment of significance

- Equinor estimates the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over the lifetime of the Rosebank oilfield at 254 million tonnes (Mt) CO_2eq. It says these are "*not significant when viewed in the context of international climate commitments, sector-specific Net Zero strategies, and UK government policies*" (p1.7.2).

[10] Potsdam Institution for Climate Impact Research, Land and ocean carbon sinks weakening, and other new insights from climate science, 30 Oct. 2025. https://www.pik-potsdam.de/en/news/latest-news/land-and-ocean-carbon-sinks-weakening-and-other-new-insights-from-climate-science

[11] Climate Change Tracker, 'Current Remaining Carbon Budget', 17 June 2025. https://climatechangetracker.org/climate-change-progress/current-remaining-carbon-budget-and-trajectory-till-exhaustion Note that the 130 GtCO2eq estimate for the remaining carbon budget differs from the Global Carbon Project figure cited in the Overview, which is based on more recent data.

[12] Climate Action Tracker, *Little change in warming outlook for four years; new 2035 climate targets make no difference*, Nov. 2025. https://climateactiontracker.org/publications/warming-projections-global-update-2025/

[13] Justin Rowlatt, 'Will Rosebank oil and gas help UK energy security?', BBC News, 27 Sept. 2023. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-66933804?post=asset%3A79e180df-b921-413e-9912-175cd64e8942#post

[14] Climate Action Tracker, 'EU's new climate targets', Nov. 2025. https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/eu/2035-ndc/

- However, combustion emissions are *always* "significant" effects of fossil fuel projects, as confirmed by the Supreme Court's ruling in our case, "*It is not disputed that these emissions, which can easily be quantified, will have a significant impact on climate*."[15] Note that this case concerned a much smaller oil development. The total emissions from Horse Hill oil were estimated at 10.6 Mt CO_2eq, compared with Rosebank's estimated at 254 Mt. Yet the parties to the case – which included the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government – did not dispute that they were significant.
- In 2022 the International Institute for Sustainable Development report found that there was a large consensus across all published studies that developing new oil and gas fields was incompatible with the Paris Agreement 1.5°C target[16].
- In addition, and as stated previously, the totality of climate policies around the world will currently put us on track to breach 2.5°C of warming by the end of the century. Under this "*Intermediate*" future emissions profile and by Equinor's own assessment (Table 14, page 44)) the magnitude of the impact of the Rosebank Development's Downstream Scope 3 Emissions would be significant.
- Para. 6.5.6.2 states that, "*the Rosebank Development is aligned with future demand estimations for oil and gas in each of the IEA scenarios*". It is unclear how this conclusion has been reached. Evidence shows that global oil and gas demand in modelled economic scenarios aligned with the 1.5°C temperature goal can be met or exceeded by forecast production from operational oil and gas fields[17]. This is additional proof that the Rosebank oilfield is not needed and not compatible with the delivery of the Paris Agreement.

2.2 Failure to assess the effects of greenhouse gas emissions

- Crucially, Equinor has made no attempt to assess the actual effects of the 254 Mt CO_2eq emissions. The Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2020[18] require (Schedule 5, para 3) the assessment of a project's "*effects*" on listed factors including population and human health; biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under any law of any part of the United Kingdom; land, soil, water, air and climate; any impact on the environment in other countries; and more. It also includes the "*cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing or approved projects*" (see section 2.3 overleaf).
- The Supreme Court ruling in *Finch* stressed the need for "*comprehensive and high-quality information about the likely significant environmental effects of a project*"[19].
- The *Finch* ruling also refers to the case Squire v Shropshire Council [2019][20], which concerned the grant of planning permission for a facility for the intensive rearing of chickens. A by-product of the planned activity would be the production of substantial quantities of poultry manure, which was to be spread as fertiliser on agricultural land in the local area. The Court of Appeal held that the EIA for the project was deficient and unlawful because it did not include a proper assessment of indirect environmental effects of the proposed development in the form of smell and dust that would emanate from the storage and spreading of the manure. The floods,

[15] Finch v Surrey County Council, para. 7.
[16] https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2022-10/navigating-energy-transitions-mapping-road-to-1.5.pdf
[17] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/policy-lab/sites/policy_lab/files/report-climate_implications_pages_online.pdf
[18] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1497
[19] Finch v Surrey County Council, para. 153.
[20] Ibid., para. 160.

storms, health impacts, etc, that would arise from the warming effect of the carbon emissions from Rosebank are equivalent to the dust and smells in Squire.

- The Regulations therefore require an assessment not just of the amount of greenhouse gas emissions a development will contribute to, but also how those emissions will affect the factors mentioned.
- Furthermore, the European Court of Human Rights, in its very recent judgment on the case Greenpeace Nordic and Others v. Norway on 28 October 2025[21], ruled that approving oil and gas field development without comprehensively assessing the impacts on life and health from all emissions is prohibited under fundamental human rights.
- The linear relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and increased global average temperatures mean that such impacts can be estimated with confidence. The IPCC reports that 1,000 Gt CO_2 emissions causes a best estimate of 0.45°C of increased global surface temperature.[22] A study published in *Nature Climate Change in 2023* similarly concludes that 100 Gt of CO_2e emissions causes an increase of global temperatures of 0.05°C.[23]
- The information on temperature rise can be used in combination with the numerous attribution studies that have been published to estimate the effects – such as reduction in sea ice, reduction in snow cover, increased rainfall, likelihood of droughts, fires and floods, and human mortality – from given volumes of greenhouse gas emissions.[24]
- For example, in the case of mortality, a 2021 paper published in *Nature* drew on public health studies to conclude that for every 4,434 metric tonnes of CO_2 pumped into the atmosphere beyond the 2020 rate of emissions, one person globally will die prematurely from the increased temperature.[25]

2.3 Failure to address cumulative effects

- Equinor states in para. 6.4.9 that, "*The data in Table 16 indicates that Rosebank Development production comprises between 0.06% and 0.08% of global oil production in the 1.5°C compatible case and between 0.07% and 0.03% of global oil production in the 2°C compatible case. Therefore, the Rosebank Development P10 production profile is within a Paris Agreement aligned production pathway.*"

---

[21] European Court of Human Rights, Greenpeace Nordic and Others v. Norway. https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-245561

[22] Valérie Masson-Delmotte et al., 'Summary for Policymakers', in *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, 2021, page 28, para. D.1.1. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf

[23] Lamboll, R.D., Nicholls, Z.R.J., Smith, C.J. et al. 'Assessing the size and uncertainty of remaining carbon budgets', *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 13, pp. 1360–1367, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-023-01848-5

[24] For example, Dirk Notz and Julienne Stroeve, 'Observed Arctic sea-ice loss directly follows anthropogenic CO_2 emissions', *Science* 354: 6363, 2016, p. 747, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aag2345; Mika Rantanen et al., 'The Arctic has warmed nearly four times faster than the globe since 1979', *Communications Earth & Environment*, vol. 3, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-022-00498-3; Wim Thiery et al., 'Intergenerational inequities in exposure to climate extremes', *Science* 374: 6564 pp. 158–160, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abi7339;R. Daniel Bressler, 'The mortality cost of carbon', *Nature Communications*, vol. 12, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-24487-w ; A. M. Vicedo-Cabrera et al., *The burden of heat-related mortality attributable to recent human-induced climate change, Nature Climate Change*, vol 11, 2021, p. 492–500, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-021-01058-x; IPCC, 'Summary for Policymakers', in *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 2023

[25] R. Daniel Bressler, 'The mortality cost of carbon', *Nature Communications*, vol. 12, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-24487-w

- This ignores the cumulative effect. Rosebank will add to all the other existing and planned oil and gas sites. Therefore its impact must be considered in relation to the stock of existing fields elsewhere. The government's EIA scope 3 supplementary guidance[26] says: "*Given the global effect of GHG emissions, the ES must consider the cumulative effects of the proposed project with other existing and planned future projects, in a global context*."
- Existing oil and gas fields contain more fossil fuels than the world can afford to burn. As referred to in the Overview a 2023 briefing from Oil Change International[27] found that "committed emissions" from the oil, gas and coal to be extracted from existing fields and mines amounted to 915 $GtCO_2$. This is more than five times the global carbon budget (of 170 Gt CO_2) for a 50% chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C.
- The cumulative effect of greenhouse gas emissions on the atmosphere also means that the timing of reductions is critical. The earlier we prevent emissions, the more years of cumulative heating are avoided.

2.4. Reliance on other regimes

- Equinor's assertion that the emissions from Rosebank are "*not significant*" relies on all parties to the Paris Agreement meeting the Agreement's temperature goals. Para. 6.5.3 says, "*In a scenario where Parties to the Paris Agreement have failed to 'hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial level' and pursue efforts 'to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels', the emissions from any project, including the Rosebank Development, could have a significant effect on climate. This is because, all emissions in that scenario will have a significant effect due to the sensitivity of the climate as a receptor and the cumulative effect of continuing unabated emissions*." And at para. 6.5.4: "*However, it must be recognised that Parties to the Paris Agreement have committed to achieving the overarching goal to "hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels*" and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels".
- The Finch judgment states: "*It was a clear legal error to regard this aspect of planning policy as a justification for limiting the scope of an EIA. An assumption made for planning purposes that non-planning regimes will operate effectively to avoid or mitigate significant environmental effects does not remove the obligation to identify and assess in the EIA the effects which the planning authority is assuming will be avoided or mitigated*."[28] In the present case, Equinor is treating the Paris regime and UK Climate Change Act as "other regimes" which will deal with the problem of its vast greenhouse gas emissions. This is not acceptable.

3. No discussion of alternatives to oil production

- Both the Offshore EIA Regulations Guidance and the new supplementary guidance say that the Environment Statement should also describe the reasonable alternatives studied by a developer for a proposed project.

---

[26] Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – Assessing effects of downstream scope 3 emissions on climate*, June 2025, page 12. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6853fa3d1203c00468ba2b15/Supplementary_guidance_-_Effects_of_Scope_3_Emissions.pdf

[27] Oil Change International, *Sky's Limit Data Update*, 2023, https://www.oilchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/skys-limit-data-update-2023-v3.pdf

[28] Finch v Surrey County Council, para. 108.

- Equinor discussed alternatives in Chapter 2 of the 2022 Rosebank Environmental Statement.[29] It covers alternative field development options, but it does not consider alternatives to oil production. To be complete, the ES should have been revised with consideration of alternative energy generation methods such as offshore wind.

4. Submission by Uplift

We formally endorse and adopt in full the detailed points made in the consultation response by Uplift, which is appended here, and wish for our submissions to be considered in conjunction with theirs.

5. Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, consent for the Rosebank Project should not be granted.

[29] Equinor, Ithaca Energy and Suncor Energy, *Rosebank Environmental Statement*, 2022. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62f62fec8fa8f50b4de7f743/Rosebank_Environmental_Statement_-_Final_for_Submission_To_OPRED_Equinor_3rd_August_2022.pdf

Business Support Team
Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
AB1 Building
Crimon Place
Aberdeen
AB10 1BJ

By email: OPRED@Energysecurity.gov.uk
20 November 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

Rosebank Field Development - Consultation Response - Ref. ES/2022/001

Introduction

1. This document sets out Uplift's response to the current consultation by the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning (**OPRED**) on the Further Information regarding the Rosebank Field Development (**Rosebank Project**), for which Equinor UK Limited on behalf of the Licensees (Equinor UK Ltd. and Ithaca SP E&P Ltd.) has made an application for consent to the Oil and Gas Authority (**OGA**, operating as North Sea Transition Authority (**NSTA**)).

2. In reviewing the Rosebank Project's Further Information (**Further Information**), we consider that it fails to comply with the requirements of the Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environment Impact Assessment) Regulations 2020 (**EIA Regulations**), and the Government's Supplementary Guidance for assessing the effects of downstream scope 3 emissions on climate from offshore oil and gas projects (**Supplementary Guidance**), as covered in further detail below. Specifically, there is:

    a. a failure to adequately assess the significant effects of scope 3 emissions from the Rosebank Project on the climate;

    b. a failure to properly assess the significant effects of the Rosebank Project on the environment that are not limited to downstream scope 3 emissions; and

    c. a lack of credibility in claims made regarding 'other relevant information for the Secretary of State (**SoS**) to consider'.

A. Significant effects of downstream scope 3 emissions from the Rosebank Project

3. The scope 3 emissions from the Rosebank Project would have a significant effect on the climate. As the details in Section A below demonstrate:

   a. the Further Information fails adequately to assess the effects of scope 3 emissions from the Rosebank Project on the climate, leading to an incorrect conclusion on the significance of scope 3 emissions from the project;

   b. the Further Information fails to comply with the Government's Supplementary Guidance in how to perform such an assessment; and

   c. the Rosebank Project is not compatible with a proper assessment of scope 3 emissions.

Misleading comparison to global totals

4. The Further Information fails to comply with the Supplementary Guidance in evaluating the significance of scope 3 emissions, in the context of comparing to global greenhouse gas (**GHG**) emissions. It instead compares the Rosebank Project's projected oil and gas production to total global oil and gas production and total global demand under a range of Integrated Assessment Model (**IAM**) pathways associated with different temperature outcomes.

5. The Further Information expresses the Rosebank Project's P10 production profiles as a proportion of global demand under the International Energy Agency's (**IEA**) Stated Policies Scenario (**STEPS**), Announced Pledges Scenario (**APS**), and Net Zero Emissions by 2050 Scenario (**NZE**). It concludes that "*the consequence is assessed as low because (…) Rosebank production profiles, and hence the Downstream Scope 3 Emissions, also decline on a similar pathway [to global demand]*".[1]

6. The Further Information also directly compares the Rosebank Project's projected oil and production with total global oil production pathways. It sets out that "*[t]he data in Table 16 indicates that Rosebank Development production comprises between 0.06% and 0.08% of global oil production in the 1.5°C compatible case and between 0.07% and 0.03% of global oil production in the 2°C compatible case*".[2] On this basis, the Further Information concludes that *"the Rosebank Development P10 production profile is within a Paris Agreement aligned production pathway*" and "*[t]he consequence is therefore assessed to be low*".[3]

7. This approach directly contradicts the Supplementary Guidance's position on the inappropriate use of global-scale comparisons, which recognises that "*characterising*

[1] Equinor. *Response to Requirement #1 (An assessment of the effects of downstream scope 3 emissions from the above project on climate) of the Regulation 12(1) Notice dated 21 July 2025* (**Further Information - Assessment of scope 3 emissions**), p.50.
[2] Equinor, above note 1, para. 6.4.9.
[3] Equinor, above note 1, para. 6.5.6.1.

scope 3 emissions from a project solely in numeric terms against global GHG emissions would not on its own provide a meaningful expression of the global effect of those scope 3 emissions, because of the obvious difference in scale between individual projects and global emissions levels".[4]

8. By comparing the output of a single field to total global oil and gas supply or demand, the analysis is structured to render any individual project inherently 'insignificant', regardless of its real and additive impact on cumulative emissions. This reasoning would imply that all oil and gas projects are insignificant, as each represents only a small fraction of a much larger cumulative total, whether measured by production or emissions. Framing a project's production only as a fraction of global total production is a meaningless exercise in the absence of a cumulative assessment of the existing global production and emissions to which it adds. This type of 'drop in the ocean' argument has been rejected by courts around the world,[5] and by the Government's Supplementary Guidance.

Missing cumulative assessment by ignoring existing and approved projects

9. The Further Information fails to comply with the EIA Regulations and the Supplementary Guidance in evaluating cumulative effects. Paragraph 4 of Schedule 6 to the EIA Regulations requires:

> "*An assessment of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment, including those resulting from—*
> *(a) …*
> *(e) the* ***cumulation*** *of effects with* ***other existing or approved projects****, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources*".[6]

10. The Supplementary Guidance emphasises this legal requirement for an assessment of cumulative effects. It is definitive in confirming that "*[g]iven the global effect of GHG emissions, the ES [Environmental Statement]* ***must consider*** *the cumulative effects of the proposed project with other existing and planned future projects, in a global context*" (emphasis added).[7] It is not explicit on the methodology for doing so.

---

[4] Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) (2025). *Supplementary Guidance for Assessing the Effects of Downstream Scope 3 Emissions on Climate from Offshore Oils and Gas Projects*, p.12.

[5] *Gloucester Resources Limited v Minister for Planning* [2019], NSWLEC 7, para. 515.
Saskatchewan v Attorney General of Canada [2021], re Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act SCC 11.
Milieudefensie v Royal Dutch Shell [2021], C/09/571932, para. 4.3.5
Milieudefensie v Royal Dutch Shell (Appeal) [2024], 200.302.332/01, para. 7.106
Urgenda Foundation v State of the Netherlands [2019], 19/00125, para. 5.7.7.

[6] Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage, Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1497) (**EIA Regulations**).
DESNZ, above note 4, p.11.

[7] DESNZ, above note 4, p.12, sec 3.1.

11. However, the approach in the Further Information has failed to lawfully consider the cumulative effects of the Rosebank Project because its approach has excluded existing and committed production from operating or in-development fossil fuel projects. It fails to distinguish between total oil and gas production in modelled scenarios and the portion of that production that originates from existing or approved projects, as opposed to new developments. As a result, the analysis fails to situate the Rosebank Project's scope 3 emissions within a cumulative global context.

12. IAMs represent oil and gas supply crudely. They typically do not model fossil fuel extraction at the project level, nor do they capture the pipeline of approved or existing developments. Consequently, IAMs do not reflect project life-cycle stages or operational details. Rather, IAMs are built around a set of energy service demands, such as heating, transportation, and industrial activity, which are determined by societal needs linked to key macroeconomic drivers, including Gross Domestic Product (**GDP**) and population. These models then determine the most cost-effective mix of energy sources to meet that demand, selecting from supply options that include oil, gas, renewable energy sources, and other technologies.

13. The volume of primary fuels extracted in any given scenario is, therefore, determined by the model's optimisation process, subject to a range of constraints and assumptions, including:

    - The size of each energy service demand;
    - Emissions limits consistent with the temperature target being modelled (e.g., 1.5°C or 2°C pathways and any permitted overshoot);
        - More ambitious carbon dioxide removal (**CDR**) assumptions (e.g., afforestation, or bioenergy or direct air capture combined with carbon capture and storage (**CCS**)) allow IAMs to model higher fossil fuel supply, particularly in the near and medium term, because removals compensate emissions later in the century.
    - The relative cost of different energy supply chains to meet each energy service demand (e.g., cost of oil to power combustion engine cars vs renewables to power electric vehicles (**EVs**));
    - Supply-side limitations*, e.g., limits on the maximum amount of oil and gas extraction at the aggregate country or region level;
    - Trade constraints (e.g., liquefied natural gas (**LNG**) export/import capacity); and
    - End-use technology constraints (e.g., the rate of EV deployment).

14. In broad terms, the level of oil and gas demand projected in an IAM scenario reflects the outcome of these 'levers' rather than a pre-determined allocation of production. These models are not designed to disaggregate production by field, nor do they

* Note IAMs typically do not model fossil extraction at the project level and, therefore, do not represent project life-cycle state or details of their operation.

represent existing, or the pipeline, of approved projects. That is, they typically do not model the life-cycle stage of fossil fuel projects. This simplistic approach means that IAMs are not inherently cumulative in a manner that is relevant to the assessment of the significance of the Rosebank Project and so fail to address cumulative impacts.

15. The simplistic approach also limits the value of IAMs in assessing significance and demonstrates that Equinor UK Limited has made inappropriate use of them to determine significance in the case of the Rosebank Project. The "field vs global comparison" renders significance impossible to determine: under this approach, it is unclear what level of emissions from a single field would be considered misaligned with global production. If every new field adopted the same methodology, each would appear individually 'insignificant', even as their combined output could far exceed levels compatible with climate-safe pathways, driving systemic overproduction and undermining net-zero objectives. The further information, therefore, fails to provide a robust or lawful evaluation of the project's overall climate impact. This approach neither aligns with the Supplementary Guidance, nor with best practice in cumulative emissions analysis.

16. A scientifically and legally robust approach to determining cumulative effects using pathways, and in turn, significance, would overlay existing and committed production from current and in-development fossil fuel projects onto the supply projected in the climate-pathway models (Figure 1). This would involve establishing a baseline of projected emissions from existing fields worldwide, with explicit assumptions about whether, how, and why any projects would produce less than their full reserves. This baseline should then be subtracted from emissions in a Paris-aligned pathway to determine the remaining 'emissions space' available for new projects. The project's production (emissions) would then be evaluated as an incremental addition to this existing and committed supply.

17. This cumulative approach, consistent with methodologies adopted in the IEA World Energy Outlook (**WEO**) scenario analyses,[8] International Institute for Sustainable Development (**IISD**) report on navigating energy transitions,[9] and University College London (**UCL**) report on climate implications of new oil and gas fields in the UK,[10] and peer-reviewed literature on establishing an accurate baseline,[11] would enable a meaningful assessment of whether the addition of the Rosebank Project's production is compatible with Paris-aligned pathways.

[8] International Energy Agency (IEA) (2025), *World Energy Outlook 2025*.
[9] International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) (2022). *Navigating Energy Transitions: Mapping the road to 1.5°C*.
[10] Muttitt G, Green F and Pye S (2025). *The Climate Implications of New Oil and Gas Fields in the UK - An Overview of the Evidence*. UCL Policy Lab, UCL Energy Institute & UCL Department of Political Science.
[11] Bustamante ML *et al*, (2024) *The climate test: a tool to evaluate alignment of energy infrastructure decisions with climate goals*. Climate Policy 25(5): 617-632.

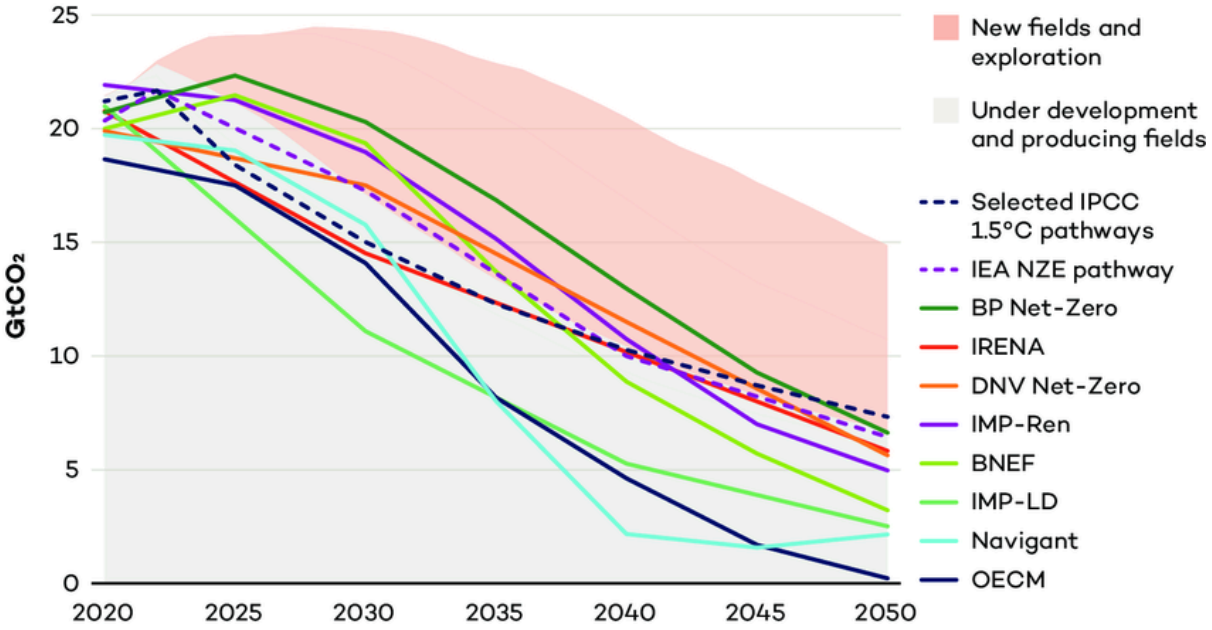

Figure 1: Projected global oil and gas production from existing (shaded grey) versus new (shaded pink) fields, compared to oil and gas consumption in 1.5°C scenarios. Source: IISD Navigating energy transitions 2022.

18. Consequently, the use of modelled global production volumes as the denominator in the analysis of the Further Information is methodologically inappropriate and it fails to produce a valid or cumulative assessment of significance.

19. Accordingly, OPRED should require Equinor UK Limited to undertake a cumulative, 1.5°C consistent assessment of scope 3 emissions that situates the Rosebank Project within the broader context of existing and approved global fossil fuel production. Global fossil fuel production data is available from providers such as Wood Mackenzie, Rystad, and IHS Markit. Peer-reviewed, credible estimates of committed emissions from fossil fuel production have also been published and are available.[12]

20. Only a cumulative approach can provide a meaningful assessment of the project's compatibility with the UK's obligations under the Paris Agreement. The scientific evidence outlined above clearly demonstrates that there is no remaining allowance for new oil and gas projects within Paris-aligned pathways. Therefore, a credible, cumulative assessment of the Rosebank's Project's scope 3 emissions would conclude that there is no remaining allowance for the Rosebank Project within Paris-aligned pathways, and, therefore, the project is not compatible with the UK's obligations under the Paris Agreement.

[12] Trout K *et al* (2022). *Existing fossil fuel extraction would warm the world beyond 1.5°C*. *Environ. Res. Lett.* 17: 064010.
Oil Change International (2023). *Sky's Limit Data Update: Shut Down 60% of Existing Fossil Fuel Extraction to Keep 1.5°C in Reach*.

Failure to consider global GHGs in baseline assessment

21. The Further Information fails to consider global GHGs in the baseline assessment. According to the Supplementary Guidance, "*[a] reasonable future estimate of global GHGs affecting climate over the lifetime of a project needs to be considered as part of the baseline scenario (…) Therefore, the scope 3 emissions estimated to be produced by the project (…) should be evaluated in the context of a global baseline scenario of GHGs*".[13]

22. The Further Information's consideration of future GHG emissions describes various scenarios for future GHG emissions, but does not treat these as a baseline.[14] A baseline, however, is "*a reference point against which the impact of a new project can be compared*",[15] making it an essential component of the impact assessment as it allows the project's impact to be measured as the difference between the state of the environment with, and without, the project. This is underlined by the Supplementary Guidance's requirement to present the scope 3 emissions from a new project against "*a no-project ("do-nothing") scenario*".[16]

23. In the Further Information, the presented scenarios do not consider the world without the Rosebank Project and they offer no means to compare how the environment changes with the addition of the Rosebank Project. The Further Information even states that "*[f]or the Assessment, a 'do-nothing' scenario (e.g., a scenario where the Rosebank Development does not proceed) would result in zero emissions*".[17] However, this is clearly incorrect as a world without the Rosebank Project (the baseline) is not one with zero emissions.

Use of some inadequate model pathways

24. Not only does the Further Information use energy/emissions pathways wrongly in generating global figures for comparison (see above at paragraphs 4 to 8), many of the pathways in its assessment of significance **are not constrained by a 1.5°C temperature goal**, despite a 1.5°C threshold being the agreed primary temperature goal for limiting the global average temperature increase under the Paris Agreement.[18]

    a. The Further Information includes pathways with temperature targets of 2°C, 2.5°C, 3°C, and 4°C in Table 13 (warming categories C3 to C8); 3°C (SSP2-4.5) and 4°C (SSP3-7.0) in Table 15; and 2°C (The Production Gap report) in Table 16, 2.4°C (IEA STEPS) and 1.7 °C (IEA APS)[19] in Table 17.

[13] DESNZ, above note 4, p.9.
[14] Equinor, above note 1, para. 3.3.
[15] Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) (2022). *Assessing greenhouse gas emissions and evaluating their significance*, 2nd edn, p.17.
[16] DESNZ, above note 4, p.9.
[17] Equinor, above note 1, p.14, fn 4.
[18] International Court of Justice (ICJ) (2025). *Advisory Opinion: On the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change*, ICJ Case No. 187, para. 224.
[19] IEA (2024), *World Energy Outlook 2024*, p.232, fig. 5.26.

b. The inclusion of pathways above 1.5°C is irrelevant for the purpose of assessing Paris-aligned significance, given 1.5°C is the primary temperature goal under the Paris Agreement. Additionally, pathways with a 2°C temperature target cannot be considered consistent with the Paris Agreement's secondary temperature goal of **well below** 2°C. This is especially the case given that developed nations are expected to demonstrate higher ambition, in accordance with the principle of "*reflecting [their] common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances*".[20]

25. Pathways that minimise overshoot should be preferred. Pathways with high levels of overshoot can be considered incompatible with the precautionary principle, which is a fundamental principle that "*underlies the EIA Directive*".[21] As a general principle of European Union (**EU**) law, and the principle on which EU policy on the environment is based, the precautionary principle, therefore, applies where legislation is derived from EU law, as is the case for the EIA Regulations. The precautionary principle has also been adopted and applied by the UK courts.[22] A substantial body of scientific literature highlights the dangers and risks associated with high-overshoot scenarios,[23] including uncertainty regarding the sustainability, scalability, and economic feasibility of negative emissions technologies required to achieve subsequent CO_2 drawdown.[24]

a. DESNZ's own commissioned report on the global consequences of climate overshoot pathways highlights that "*overshooting 1.5°C would have a negative global economic impact*" and discusses how a 1.5°C scenario permitting overshoot carries greater risks than a 1.5°C scenario with no overshoot.[25]

b. The consequences are "*[i]n an overshoot, floods, droughts and extreme weather events would become stronger (…) Biodiversity losses would more than double to very high levels (…) The risk of fire would increase substantially*" and "*[t]he risk of triggering climatic tipping points with deleterious global consequences would be higher*".[26]

c. The report also highlights that "*[e]ven warming of 1.5°C would have negative impacts. Overshooting 1.5°C would worsen the impacts*", and concludes that

---

[20] United Nations Climate Change Committee (UNCCC) (2015). *The Paris Agreement*.

[21] *R (on the application of Champion) (Appellant) v North Norfolk District Council and another (Respondents)* [2015] UKSC 52, 1 WLR 3710, para. 51.

[22] *R (Kenyon) v SSHCLG* [2020] EWCA Civ 302, para. 66.
Also see *R (Preston) v Cumbria County Council* [2019] EWHC 1362 (Admin).

[23] Schleussner C *et al.* (2024). Overconfidence in climate overshoot. *Nature* 634: 366-373.
Reisinger A *et al*. (2025). Overshoot: A conceptual Review of Exceeding and Returning to Global Warming of 1.5C. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.* 50: 185-217.
IPCC (2023). Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report.
DESNZ (2024). *Global consequences of climate overshoot pathways: Final report*.

[24] Buure K (2025). The eternal promise of carbon capture, utilisation and storage: Is there a business case? *ERSS* 127: 104308.
Fuhrman J *et al*. (2020). Food–energy–water implications of negative emissions technologies in a +1.5 °C future. *Nature* 10: 920-927.

[25] DESNZ, above note 23.

[26] DESNZ, above note 23, pp. 3, 44.

"*[i]mpacts can be minimised by keeping the global temperature as low as possible*".[27]

26. Accordingly, the SoS's decision should prioritise pathways aligned with 1.5°C and with limited, or no, overshoot. This is necessary to ensure the assessment is scientifically robust, consistent with the Paris Agreement and the precautionary principle, and, critically, keeps 1.5°C within reach.

Misleading engagement with scientific evidence

27. The Further Information makes misleading use of scientific evidence by selectively relying on evidence that supports the developer's arguments while ignoring contradictory evidence which is critical for a complete understanding of the facts. This cherry-picking approach is at odds with the Supplementary Guidance, which states that "*the content and context in the ES (…) should be comprehensive, to aid the decision maker in reaching a conclusion on the significant effects of the project on the environment and a decision as to whether to agree to the grant of consent*".[28] It further hinders the SoS in reaching an informed conclusion on the significant effects of the project on the environment, for which the EIA Regulations require the SoS to take *inter alia* the environmental statement and Further Information into account.[29]

28. In outlining the current environmental baseline in section 3.2, the Further Information omits the clear reality of the extremely limited remaining global carbon budget. The Further Information cites work from Forster *et al*,[30] in particular that total global CO_2 emissions were 41.1 GtCO2 (+/- 5.5 GtCO2) in 2023 and that "*from the beginning of 2025, the remaining carbon budget to maintain warming levels to below 1.5°C with >50% probability is 130 GtCO2eq*".[31] However, it does not actually engage with these two statements to inform its assessment. These statements demonstrate that the remaining carbon budget to maintain warming levels to below 1.5°C will likely be used up before the end of 2028, which the Rosebank Environmental Statement (**Rosebank ES**) states would be the Rosebank Project's first full year of production. Consequently, the Rosebank Project's total emissions of 254 MtCO2eq would have a significant impact on the climate, pushing warming levels even further beyond 1.5°C.

29. The Further Information also misleadingly omits key scientific evidence in the assessment of significance (section 6.4).[32] While the Further Information correctly states that the Production Gap report analyses the discrepancy between governments' planned fossil fuel production and production levels consistent with

[27] DESNZ, above note 23.
[28] DESNZ, above note 4, p.11.
[29] EIA regulations, above note 6, sec. 14, paras 1 (a,b), 2.
[30] Equinor, above note 1, para. 3.2.
Forster P *et al* (2025). *Indicators of Global Climate Change 2024: annual update of key indicators of the state of the climate system and human influence*. *Earth System Science Data* 17(6): 2641-2680.
[31] Equinor, above note 1, paras 3.2.4, 3.2.12, referring to Forster *et al*. (as above note 30).
[32] Equinor, above note 1, from p.45.

limiting warming to 1.5°C or 2°C, including the UK,[33] it fails to mention the key findings of both the 2023 and 2025 reports. These include *inter alia*:

a. that *"[g]overnments, in aggregate, still plan to produce far more fossil fuels than would be consistent with achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement"*;

b. that, *"[c]ountries are now collectively planning even more fossil fuel production than two years ago, with projected 2030 production exceeding levels consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C by more than 120% (…) and 77% above the median 2°C*";

c. that, *"[t]hese plans undermine countries' Paris Agreement commitments, and go against expectations that under current policies global demand for coal, oil, and gas will peak before 2030"*; and

d. that, *"[r]eaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the second half of the century, as the Paris Agreement calls for, will require cutting fossil fuel production and use to the very lowest levels possible"*.[34]

30. To credibly engage with the Production Gap report, the Further Information must acknowledge global governments' planned fossil fuel production and global production levels consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C or 2°C. However, it only compares the individual Rosebank Project to the global production levels consistent with 1.5°C or 2°C of warming and entirely omits consideration of planned fossil fuel production. This omits the most important and relevant part of the Production Gap reports' findings, with a misleading comparison to global totals and an omission of cumulative production (see above at paragraphs 4-8). If the Further Information had engaged correctly with the report, this would have demonstrated the reality that approving any new oil and gas field, including the Rosebank Project, would be inconsistent with achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement (see above at paragraph 20).

31. Therefore, it could not have reached the conclusion that the Rosebank Project's scope 3 emissions would not have a significant effect on climate based on the fact that "*Parties to the Paris Agreement have committed to achieving the overarching goal to "hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels*".[35] The Production Gap report is clear that governments' planned fossil fuel production undermines their commitments to the Paris Agreement. In fact, the report states that achieving the Paris Agreement goals will require governments "*cutting fossil fuel production and use to the very lowest levels possible*", which is in stark contrast with the claims made in the Further Information.

[33] Equinor, above note 1, para 6.4.7.
[34] SEI, CA, and IISD (2025). *The Production Gap Executive Summary, 2025 report.*
SEI, CA, and IISD (2023). *The Production Gap Executive Summary, 2023 report.*
[35] Equinor, above note 1, paras 6.5.3 and 6.5.4.

Nowhere does the Further Information consider how opening Rosebank could be consistent with this.

32. Another case of the Further Information omitting scientific evidence is Equinor's assessment of sector-specific net zero strategies and reduction trajectories (**SSS-NZ**), in particular the IEA's NZE Scenario.[36] The Further Information mentions the NZE Scenario, but fails to mention that under this scenario, there is no need for investment in new fossil fuel supply.[37] In fact, "*[b]eyond projects already committed as of 2021, there are no new oil and gas fields approved for development in our pathway, and no new coal mines or mine extension are required*".[38] In its 2023 update, the IEA confirms the previous finding, stating that "*[n]o new long-lead time upstream oil and gas projects are needed in the NZE scenario, neither are new coal mines, mine extensions or new unabated coal plants*".[39] That there is still no room for new oil, gas, and coal expansion or investment beyond existing fields under the NZE Scenario has been re-affirmed in the IEA's WEO, published in November 2025.[40]

33. Similarly, the Further Information fails to mention that under a net zero by 2050 scenario with a pathway to limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5°C, the IEA estimates that the demand for oil and gas is set to decline by at least 25% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.[41] Consequently, "*the pace of decline in oil and gas demand in the 2030s may also mean that a number of high cost projects come to an end before they reach the end of their technical lifetimes*".[42] However, as explained by Green *et al*, it is particularly difficult to close existing fields for economic and political reasons related to jobs, vested interests, infrastructure lock-in effects, and legal reasons related to costly compensation.[43] For these reasons, it is more pragmatic and effective to prevent new fossil fuel projects than to attempt to close existing capacity early.

34. Putting this scientific evidence in context with the Rosebank Project, under the NZE Scenario, the Rosebank Project is neither needed, nor should it be granted development consent.

Inclusion of, and reliance on, irrelevant information

35. The Further Information includes, and relies on, **irrelevant information** in several sections, which obfuscates the relevant information on which the SoS's decision must be based. According to the EIA Regulations, the environmental statement must contain "*the information listed in Schedule 6, **as relevant***" (emphasis added).[44] As the

[36] Equinor, above note 1, from para. 6.4.13.
IEA (2021). *Net Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector*.
IEA (2023). *Net Zero Roadmap: A Global Pathway to Keep the 1.5°C Goal in Reach* [2024 revised edition].
[37] IEA (2021), above note 36, p.21.
[38] IEA (2021), above note 36, p.21.
[39] IEA (2023), above note 36, p.16.
[40] IEA, above note 8.
[41] IEA (2023), above note 36, p.16.
[42] IEA (2023), above note 36, p.76.
[43] Green F *et al* (2024). No new fossil fuel projects: The norm we need. *Science* 384(6699): 954-957.
[44] EIA Regulations, as above note 6, sec. 8 and schedule 6.

EIA Regulations do not refer to the concept of different emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3), the Supplementary Guidance sets out the expectations on the content required in an ES for assessing effects of scope 3 emissions.[45]

36. Firstly, the Further Information includes a range of instruments as purported environmental protection objectives when they are not. The EIA Regulations state that "*environmental protection objectives established in retained EU law or at national level*" must be taken into account when assessing the significance of the likely effects of the project on the environment.[46] According to the Supplementary Guidance, the "*[e]nvironmental effects from scope 3 emissions from downstream activities largely relate to the impacts on climate from the release of GHGs*".[47] For this reason, "***[g]lobal GHG emissions*** *are a relevant consideration to assessing scope 3 emissions and in understanding "the impact of the project on climate", as required under Schedule 6 of the EIA Regulations*", and not territorial emissions (emphasis added).[48] In this context, the Supplementary Guidance also refers to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**), in particular the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.[49]

    a. The Further Information summarises environmental protection objectives in Table 5, stating that these are "*relevant to the consideration of the Rosebank Development's Downstream Scope 3 Emissions*".[50] However, against the background of the EIA Regulations and the Supplementary Guidance, the following legislative and policy instruments named in Table 5 are not environmental protection objectives:

Instrument named in Table 5	Reason for irrelevance
UK Carbon Budget	As stated in the Supplementary Guidance, the UK Carbon Budget under the The Climate Change Act (**CCA**) 2008 (as amended) is based on territorial emissions and as such is legally irrelevant for the assessment of scope 3 emissions.[51]
UK Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (DESNZ, 2023)	The UK Carbon Budget Delivery Plan, now the Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan (**CBGDP**) (DESNZ, 2025), sets out how the Government meets its

[45] DESNZ, above note 4, pp.6, 7.
[46] EIA Regulations, as above note 6, schedule 6(5)(d).
[47] DESNZ, above note 4, p.8.
[48] DESNZ, above note 4, p.8.
[49] DESNZ, above note 4, p.8.
[50] Equinor, above note 1, para. 4.3.1, table 5.
[51] Equinor, above note 1, pp. 6, 8.

	statutory carbon budgets. As set out above, these are based on territorial emissions and as such are legally irrelevant for the assessment of scope 3 emissions.
Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (UK Government, 2024)	The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan focuses on a pathway to a clean power system and does not establish any environmental protection objectives for the assessment of scope 3 emissions.
Climate Change Committee (**CCC**) 2025 report to Parliament	As set out in Section 36 of the CCA, the CCC's annual report to Parliament focuses on the UK's progress towards meeting the carbon budgets and the target for 2050. As set out above, these are based on territorial emissions and as such are not relevant for the assessment of scope 3 emissions.
Balanced Pathway scenario	The Balanced Pathway scenario is a roadmap guiding the UK's Seventh Carbon Budget, which is based on territorial emissions and as such not relevant for the assessment of scope 3 emissions.
UK Nationally Determined Contribution (**NDC**) (2025)	The UK's NDC focuses on scope 1 and 2 emissions, which means that it does not establish any environmental protection objectives for the assessment of scope 3 emissions.
Independent Review of Net Zero (Mission Zero, 2023)	The Independent Review of Net Zero is a report focusing on the UK's net zero approach and does not establish any environmental protection objectives for the assessment of scope 3 emissions.
Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener	The Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener was adopted under the Johnson Government and ruled

	unlawful in 2022.[52]
Powering Up Britain, The Net Zero Growth Plan (2023)	Powering Up Britain, The Net Zero Growth Plan was adopted under the Sunak Government, and has been superseded by plans under the current Labour Government.
British Energy Security Strategy (2022)	The British Energy Security Strategy was adopted under the Johnson Government and has been superseded by plans under the current Labour Government.
North Sea Transition Deal (**NSTD**, 2021)	The NSTD is a sectoral deal between the Government and the offshore oil and gas industry and does not establish any environmental protection objectives for the assessment of scope 3 emissions.
Scottish National Marine Plan (2015)	The Scottish National Marine Plan covers the management of both Scottish inshore waters and offshore waters and does not establish any environmental protection objectives for the assessment of scope 3 emissions. In addition, an updated version (plan 2) was open for public consultation this year, meaning that the 2015 version is soon outdated.

b. Based on this assessment, the majority of the seventeen instruments that the Further Information cites do not constitute environmental protection objectives and are also legally irrelevant for the purposes of a scope 3 emissions assessment. Those named in Table 5 that are relevant to the consideration of the Rosebank Project's scope 3 emissions include the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement, recent Conference of the Parties (**COP**), and the Glasgow Climate Pact.[53] The CCA is relevant for environmental protection objectives only insofar as it brings the broader goals of the Paris Agreement into consideration on scope 3 emissions. However, as the Supplementary Guidance clarifies, the CCA gives effect to the

[52] *Friends of the Earth Limited, ClientEarth, Good Law Project and Joanna Wheatley v Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy* [2022] EWHC 1841.
[53] Equinor, above note 1, table 5.

reduction of territorial GHG emissions, and the considerations of the CCA should, therefore, be included for the assessment of scope 1 and 2 emissions.[54]

37. By including so much irrelevant information on environmental protection objectives, the Further Information creates a confusing picture of the policy landscape that guides the assessment of scope 3 emissions and obfuscates the relevant information on which the SoS's decision must be based.

38. Secondly, the Further Information includes a variety of irrelevant information regarding the significance assessment of the Rosebank Project's scope 3 emissions. As set out above, this ranges from the misleading comparison to global totals (paragraphs 4-8) to the use of some inadequate model pathways (paragraphs 24-26).

39. In addition, the significance assessment includes irrelevant information regarding UK territorial energy policy, strategy, and demand projections, specifically referencing the CCC's Balanced Pathway. The Further Information sets out that "*[t]he CB7 demand projection indicates that UK demand for oil and gas will continue to exceed UKCS oil and gas production in this decarbonisation pathway (Figure 7)*".[55] It subsequently concludes that "*UK Gov-CPS - The Rosebank Development is included within the UKCS gross gas and oil production trajectories compared with future demand under CB7 as set out in Figure 7. The consequence is therefore assessed to be low*".[56]

40. However, the CCC has highlighted that "*[e]xpansion of fossil fuel production is not in line with Net Zero*".[57] The CCC acknowledges that "*[t]he UK will continue to need some oil and gas until it reaches Net Zero, but this does not in itself justify the development of new North Sea fields*". More recently, the CCC stated that "*continued reliance on fossil fuels undermines UK energy security*".[58]

41. Given that oil and gas are traded internationally (and regionally in the case of pipeline gas), balancing demand and supply should be assessed at the global or regional level, not within domestic territorial boundaries.[59] The reliance on UK-specific demand projections in the Further Information to justify new extraction, therefore, lacks relevance to the proper assessment of global cumulative emissions.

42. Finally, the significance assessment argues that in a scenario where Parties to the Paris Agreement fail to meet the temperature goals, "*the emissions from any project, including the Rosebank Development, could have a significant effect on climate. This is because, all emissions in that scenario will have a significant effect due to the sensitivity of the climate as a receptor and the cumulative effect of continuing unabated emissions*".[60] The further information then moves on to say that it must be recognised, however, that Parties to the Paris Agreement have committed to

[54] DESNZ, above note 4, p.8.
[55] Equinor, above note 1, para. 6.4.22.
[56] Equinor, above note 1, para. 6.5.6.3.
[57] Climate Change Committee (CCC) (2023). *Progress in reducing emissions: 2023 report to Parliament*.
[58] CCC (2025). *Progress in reducing emissions: 2025 report to Parliament*.
[59] Muttitt G *et al*, as above note 10.
[60] Equinor, as above note 1, para. 6.5.3.

achieving the temperature goals, concluding that the Rosebank Project does not have a significant impact on climate.[61]

43. This reasoning would mean that as long as States are committed to achieving the Paris Agreement's temperature goals, oil and gas projects such as the Rosebank Project would have no significant effect on climate. While this assumption is not only factually and scientifically wrong, it is also irrelevant for assessing the significance of scope 3 emissions.

Emissions not used in the assessment of significance

44. The Further Information fails to comply with the Supplementary Guidance's requirement that *"ESs will consider how the GHG* ***emissions*** *associated with a proposed project impact climate"* (emphasis added). The assessment in the Further Information compares production volumes with modelled supply and demand, rather than evaluating scope 3 emissions. While production volumes typically correlate with emissions,[62] the purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the significance of scope 3 emissions.

45. The Further Information has followed the Supplementary Guidance in correctly assuming that all production should be considered to be combusted in their calculation of scope 3 emissions.[63] However, the conclusion drawn from the assessment of significance (sections 6.5.6.1 - 6.5.6.3) is entirely based on the Rosebank Project's production profile rather than its emissions profile. Using production volumes instead of emissions to assess significance is methodologically flawed.

46. The Further Information use of production volumes risks underestimating the comparison of Rosebank's emissions to the models' demand/supply (even though this approach is flawed to begin with). This is because models project an increasing share of non-combustion uses of oil and gas, such as for petrochemicals.[64] As a result, not all oil supply/demand accounted for in these projections, especially in the latter half of the century, is consumed through combustion. This point is emphasised in the Further Information in section 6.4.17, which mentions that "*Table 17 shows that there is ongoing demand for oil and gas in all scenarios. Three-quarters of oil demand in a NZE scenario is used in sectors where the oil is not combusted, including as a petrochemical feedstock, and in products such as paraffin waxes, asphalt and bitumen*".

47. Oil and gas demand in IAM models, particularly in 1.5°C aligned scenarios, does not

---

[61] Equinor, as above note 1, para 6.5.4.

[62] IEA (2018). *World Energy Outlook 2018: "downstream emissions from burning fossil fuels are the major source of emissions from oil and gas, accounting for roughly* ***70 to 90 per cent of lifecycle emissions from oil products and 60 to 85 per cent of those from natural gas****"*.

[63] *R (on the application of Finch on behalf of the Weald Action Group) (Appellant) v Surrey County Council and others (Respondents)* [2024] UKSC 20.

[64] Roland G, Jambeck JR, and Law, KL (2017). *Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made*. *Sci. Adv.* 3(7): e1700782.

equate to emissions from the supply of oil and gas, as some oil is used for non-combustion purposes such as plastics. Although the field vs global comparison is flawed (see above paragraphs 4 to 23), the use of production volumes introduces an additional layer of methodological inaccuracy, as a portion of the global supply/demand pertains to non-combustible uses. This approach can overstate the amount of supply/demand that is considered combustible, thereby affecting the assessments of associated emissions.

48. It is, therefore, critical that **scope 3 emissions,** rather than production volumes, form the basis for significance assessment in accordance with the Supplementary Guidance, establishing the appropriate precedent for future evaluations.

UK obligations under international law

49. As set out above, the Further Information has cherry-picked and omitted scientific evidence on climate impacts, relying on irrelevant information in assessing the likely and significant effects of the Rosebank Project. The approach is scientifically dubious and approving the project would not align with the UK's obligations under international law.

50. Furthermore, other than in relation to the climate, the Further Information does not investigate or in any way assess the indirect effects of GHG emissions on the factors identified in paragraph 5 of Schedule 6 to the EIA Regulations (i.e. population, human health, land, water, biodiversity (with particular emphasis on protected species and habitats), cultural heritage etc.) both in the UK and/or globally.[65]

51. The International Court of Justice (**ICJ**) has set out definitively States' obligations under the climate change treaties and other environmental treaties, as well as customary international law and international human rights law, emphasising a strong interrelation between these obligations.[66]

52. The Court recognised the severe and far-reaching consequences of climate change, including extreme weather events, irreversible loss of biodiversity and human life and health, noting the "*urgent and existential threat posed by climate change*".[67] It makes clear that under customary international law, States have a duty to act **with due diligence** and to **use all means at their disposal** to prevent activities carried out within their jurisdiction or control from causing significant harm to the climate system and other parts of the environment.[68]

53. The standard to which already industrialised nations are held is stringent,[69] given their historic contributions to cumulative GHG emissions and the aforementioned principle

[65] EIA Regulations, above note 6.
Also see: Borgarting Court of Appeal, Oslo, Case 24-036810ASD-BORG/02, 14th November 2025, para. 6.1.
[66] ICJ, above note 18.
[67] ICJ, above note 18, para. 73.
[68] ICJ, above note 18, p.131, para. B(a).
[69] ICJ, above note 18, para. 138.

of common, but differentiated, responsibilities and respective capabilities (**CBDR-RC**).[70] These elements include States taking, to the best of their ability, **precautionary measures which take account of scientific and technological information**, as well as relevant rules and international standards.[71]

54. As such, a State will be in breach of its international obligations if it fails to exercise due diligence to limit the quantity of emissions caused by private actors under its jurisdiction.[72] This includes regulatory action to protect the climate system from GHG emissions through fossil fuel production, fossil fuel consumption, the granting of fossil fuel exploration licences or the provision of fossil fuel subsidies.[73] Breaching obligations to protect the climate system from GHG emissions means that a State can face "*the entire panoply of legal consequences*".[74]

55. Noting the ICJ's July ruling, the European Court of Human Rights (**ECtHR**) recently held that Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (**ECHR**) requires Contracting States to subject decisions on the extraction of petroleum to **rigorous and comprehensive** environmental impact assessment. States decision-making in the context of environmental impact assessment must be conducted "*in good faith*" and be "***based on the best available science***" before the authorisation of a potentially dangerous activity that may be harmful to the right for individuals to effective protection by the State authorities from serious adverse effects of climate change on their life, health, well-being and quality of life.[75]

56. For petroleum production projects specifically, at the public authority level, there must be an assessment of whether the activity is compatible with States' obligations under national and international law to take effective measures against the adverse effects of climate change.[76]

57. The ECtHR sets out clear expectations that environmental assessment must include the cumulative GHG emissions from all projects combined, as a project by project assessment is prohibited under the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU (**EIA Directive**).[77] EIA must be based on **relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive information** and should assess the possible downstream effects of activities contributing to GHG emissions, based on the **best available science**.[78]

---

[70] ICJ, above note 18, para. 137.
[71] ICJ, above note 18, para. 136.
[72] ICJ, above note 18, paras. 252, 428.
[73] ICJ, above note 18, para. 427.
[74] ICJ, above note 18, para. 445.
[75] *Greenpeace Nordic and Others v Norway* [2025] ECHR no. 34068/21, para. 318 (emphasis added).
[76] ECHR, above note 75, para. 319.
[77] ECHR, above note 75, para. 336.
[78] ECHR, above note 75, para. 324.

58. In its ruling, the ICJ noted that the "*best available science, as presented by the IPCC, confirms that cumulative GHG emissions are the primary source of risks arising from anthropogenic climate change*".[79]

59. The Court confirmed that the 1.5°C threshold is the "***scientifically based consensus target under the Paris Agreement***" (emphasis added).[80] A lack of recognition that the primary temperature target is 1.5°C runs throughout the Further Information (in particular its use of model pathways that are not constrained by a 1.5°C temperature goal, see above at paragraph 24).

60. The UK Government itself commits to acting in accordance with its international law obligations.[81] It "*must act in good faith to comply with the law and in a way that seeks to align the UK's domestic law and international obligations, and fulfil the international obligations binding on the UK*".[82] The principles set out by the ICJ in its ruling constitute environmental protection objectives that should be taken into account.

61. The SoS is, therefore, asked to confirm in his reasoned decision whether his decision in relation to the Rosebank Project aligns with the UK's obligations as set out in the ICJ ruling.

B. Significant effects not limited to downstream scope 3 emissions from the Rosebank Project

62. The Further Information fails to assess the effects of the Rosebank Project on the environment that are not limited to downstream scope 3 emissions, leading to an incorrect conclusion on the significance of these effects from the project.

Failure to properly assess the significance of the Rosebank Project's upstream emissions

63. The Further Information does not remedy the failure of the Rosebank ES to properly assess the significance of the upstream emissions from the project. The Further Information identifies no changes or updates altering the assessment in the Rosebank ES that the impact of non-scope 3 atmospheric emissions will be insignificant.[83] However, the Rosebank Project's upstream emissions are inconsistent with the UK net

[79] ICJ, above note 18, para. 137.
[80] ICJ, above note 18, para. 224: *"At the twenty-sixth COP, which was the third CMA to the Paris Agreement, parties "[r]ecognize[d] that the impacts of climate change will be much lower at the temperature increase of 1.5°C compared with 2°C and resolve[d] to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C (see decision 1/CMA.3, Glasgow Climate Pact, 13 November 2021, UN doc. FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/10/Add.1, p. 4, para. 21)"*.
[81] UK Government, Cabinet Office. *Ministerial Code*. Para. 1.6 states: "*The Ministerial Code should be read against the background of the overarching duty on ministers to comply with the law, including international law and treaty obligations, and to protect the integrity of public life (…)*".
[82] UK Attorney General's Office (2024). *Attorney General's Legal Risk Guidance*, para. 9.
[83] Equinor. *Response to Requirement #2 (Revised and updated assessment of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment that is not limited to downstream scope 3 emissions) of the Regulation 12(1) Notice dated 21 July 2025* (**Further Information - Revised and updated assessment**), p.21.

zero target,[84] as well as with the UK carbon budgets and the NSTD.[85] Moreover, there is a failure to account for extensions to existing infrastructure and their associated emissions.[86]

64. This conclusion fails to account for relevant updates in UK Government policy (for example, the CBGDP) and the inadequacies of the original assessment in the ES. It is imperative that OPRED and the SoS are confident that the upstream GHG emissions from Rosebank would be compatible with the SoS's net zero obligation under the CCA.[87] Any vague assertions in the original ES and the Further Information of the Rosebank Project's compatibility with UK Government climate commitments and policies, or comments on what Equinor UK Limited *might* do, are insufficient to meet this obligation and would put the UK's net zero target at risk.

65. The assessment of upstream emissions in the ES employs the 'drop in the ocean' approach (the argument that any single oil and gas project is a 'drop in the ocean' of global emissions and would, therefore, make a negligible contribution to climate change), which is firmly rejected by the Supplementary Guidance.[88] To ensure a robust approach for the assessment of *all* emissions, including upstream emissions, the original assessment in the Rosebank ES should be updated to apply a cumulative approach to assessing upstream emissions and comparing the emissions to the limited remaining carbon budget.

Failure to commit to electrification

66. The failure to commit to electrifying the Rosebank Project's Floating, Production, Storage and Offloading vessel (**FPSO**) undermines the UK CBGDP for meeting the country's statutory carbon budgets, and hence poses a significant and unacceptable risk to the climate.

67. The Further Information is clear that Equinor UK Limited is seeking a field development consent without a commitment to electrify the Rosebank Project. The decision of the SoS needs to be made on this basis in line with the requirement to assess the worst case scenario.

    a. The Further Information mentions that the Rosebank Project *could* become an electrified project, but makes no guarantees that it will be electrified. It highlights that electrification would be dependent on technology being qualified and mature,

[84] For example, the reference in the Further Information to the potential for extending asset life through the development of nearby oil and gas opportunities indicates that production beyond 2050 is actively being considered.
[85] As laid out in the submission from Uplift and other organisations during the public consultation on the Rosebank Project in 2022.
[86] Above note 85.
[87] The materiality of whether a project aligns with the carbon budgets and the Net Zero obligation has already been recognised by OPRED in its 2021 Jackdaw decision, and there are no legal or factual reasons to justify a departure from that position in this case.
[88] DESNZ, above note 4, p.12.

and viability being confirmed.[89] The uncertainty around electrification was noted in the previous decision on the Rosebank Project, and remains unchanged.[90]

b. Industry behaviour illustrates the need to be cautious in relying on the electrification aspirations of companies. CNOOC, for example, recently dropped its North Sea electrification plans for the Buzzard field due to being "*unable to find an investible solution*".[91]

c. The CBGDP also acknowledged the delivery risks with electrification, including "*the high cost of infrastructure change, bottlenecks in network capacity and scheduling and a challenging investment climate*", highlighting that significant barriers remain to a project like Rosebank being electrified.

68. While electrification remains challenging, it has been given increasing importance in the Government's climate plans. The recent CBGDP has increased the assumed deployment of electrification of oil and gas installations compared to previous Carbon Budget Delivery Plans (**CBDPs**).[92] The CBGDP modelled proposals and policies includes the electrification of upstream production, noting industry emissions reduction commitments under the NSTD towards net zero by 2050.[93]

a. The sector is already off track to meet the CBGDP expectations for 2025 given no projects are currently electrified.[94] Even the highest ambition scenario of the NSTA would see first power in 2026 at the earliest.[95]

b. Further, the 2025 Emissions Monitoring Report shows lower emissions savings from electrification than the 2024 Emissions Monitoring Report relied on for the CBGDP, further indicating the sector is off track to meet CBGDP expectations.

c. The NSTA projects that the sector will not achieve net zero emissions in 2050 even in its most ambitious electrification scenario, and would only narrowly achieve the 2040 target of 90% emissions reduction in the upper end of the high-range scenario.[96]

d. The above highlights that the delivery of platform electrification upon which the CBGDP relies (and relies to an even greater degree than previous CBDPs) is already tenuous, and only when maximally deployed does the sector have a chance of aligning with the upstream emissions reduction pathway towards net zero by 2050,

---

[89] Equinor. *Response to Requirement #3 (Provision of relevant information for the Secretary of State to consider when reaching a decision on whether or not to agree to the grant of consent) of the Regulation 12(1) Notice dated 21 July 2025* (**Further Information - Other relevant information**), para. 5.3.

[90] DESNZ. *SoS decision to agree to or refuse to agree to the OGA granting of consent - Letter to the developer [Reg 14(5)] - 16/06/2023*.

[91] *Exclusive: CNOOC drops North Sea electrification plans putting flagship Green Volt floating wind scheme at risk*, *Energy Voice*, 28 August 2025.

[92] Gabbatiss J, Dunne D, Lempriere, M (2025). Q&A: The UK government's 'carbon budget delivery plan' for 2035, *Carbon Brief*, 31st October 2025.

[93] UK Government, HoC (2025). *Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan* [HC1366], p.96.

[94] UK Gov, HoC, above note, p.203.

[95] North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) (2025). *Emissions Monitoring Report 2025*.

[96] NSTA, above note 95.

and would need to be more ambitious than any existing NSTA scenario to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

69. Introducing new, unelectrified projects like the Rosebank Project that would be in production beyond 2050 clearly poses a significant risk to the UK achieving its plan to meet net zero by 2050. The SoS should not approve any additional projects that are not electrified if they are to meet their net zero obligation under CCA. The strongest opportunity the Government has to influence whether the industry meets the CBGDP is at the project approval stage, where it is empowered to prevent the development of projects like Rosebank that would undermine CBGDP delivery.

Failure to properly assess the significance of the Rosebank Project's effects on the marine environment

70. The Further Information contains insufficient information to evaluate the conclusions that there is no change in impact significance. In particular, data from claimed additional surveys and assessments, as part of the Further Information on the revised and updated ES assessment, is absent.

71. The significant effects of the Rosebank Project on the marine environment are set out in the public consultation submission on the Rosebank Project from the Ocean Alliance Against Offshore Drilling, which Uplift has considered carefully and fully endorsed. In addition, the Further Information fails to properly assess the following effects:

72. The Joint Nature Conservation Council (**JNCC**) views the deep-sea sponge condition within the Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area (**MPA**) as "*unfavourable*" and advises a recovery objective.[97] Any impact on deep-sea sponge aggregations runs counter to this.

    a. The Rosebank ES's assessment focus between KP40 and KP50 is based on assumptions of sponge aggregation depth ranges contrary to that of JNCC's latest surveys and guidance (450-550m vs JNCC's 400-600m), resulting in a 50% smaller assessed depth band.[98] This undermines the updated ES and interpretation, for example, when referencing JNCC advice on page 14 without acknowledging the discrepancy between depth bands used.

    b. In addition, the Further Information only emphasises a small number of survey stations that had sponge aggregations, ignoring the potential for sponges to occur beyond (and be impacted) outside of the limited survey area. The Further Information estimates the impacted area of seabed resulting from the laying of the

[97] JNCC (2018). *Conservation objectives for Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area*.
JNCC (2020). *Statements on conservation benefits, condition and conservation measures for Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area*, p.5, Table 1.

[98] *Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt MPA*, JNCC, 22nd May 2025.
JNCC (2018). *Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives for Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area*, p.9, 16, Table 1.

pipeline to be 0.37 km^2.[99] Beyond the mortality of all benthic organisms in the direct path of the pipeline, resultant sediment plumes and habitat changes (such as sediment size) can extend the spatial impacts to 10s-100s of metres with long-lasting adverse effects to sediment composition and deep-sea sponge populations through smothering, as evidenced in the Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives (**SACO**) for Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt MPA.[100]

73. The Further Information correctly describes the project area as an important migration route and feeding area for cetacean species, several of which have significant International Union for Conservation of Nature (**IUCN**) red list conservation status (including critically endangered, endangered and vulnerable species). The 2025 Small Cetaceans in European Atlantic Waters and the North Sea (known as **SCANS**) surveys described in the Further Information found that densities of harbour porpoise and white-beaked dolphins increased from that previously reported by two- and six-fold, respectively. An increase in spatial density would be expected to increase the number of animals that could be in the project area at any given time, thereby increasing likelihood of exposure to, for example, noise impacts from seismic surveys, drilling and vessel thrusters.

74. The Rosebank ES does outline some anthropogenic noise impact mitigation measures relating to marine mammals, in particular the use of Passive Acoustic Monitoring (**PAM**) during hours of darkness and under conditions not conducive for visual surveys.[101] This is broadly in line with JNCC advice.[102] However, more effective mitigation measures could still be employed, such as ceasing operations during these periods - for example, regulations in the US prohibit seismic activity at night and in low visibility conditions with only PAM.[103]

75. The conclusion in the Further Information that there is an absence of coral gardens does not seem defensible and appears to be based on a mischaracterisation of guidance and definitions of a coral garden from the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (**OSPAR**) Commission.[104] An OSPAR Habitat Definition document[105] and a Background Document for Coral Gardens[106] provide only a general characterisation, with threshold values for coral garden presence (including species composition and organism density) currently undetermined. The Further Information reassessed survey footage using Henry & Roberts (2014),[107] identifying several species that are listed in that criteria as potentially contributing to UK Coral Gardens - but were not included in the list of four

[99] Equinor, above note 83, p.19.
[100] JNCC (2018), above note 98, p.15, 33.
[101] Equinor, above note 83, p.315.
[102] JNCC (2023). *JNCC guidance for the use of Passive Acoustic Monitoring in UK waters for minimising the risk of injury to marine mammals from offshore activities.*
[103] US Code of Federal Regulations (2009). *Taking and Importing Marine Mammals; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to the Port of Anchorage Marine Terminal Redevelopment Project, Anchorage, Alaska*.
[104] Equinor, above note 83, para. 4.3.2 and p.159.
[105] OSPAR. *OSPAR Commission Agreement 2008-7: Coral Gardens*.
[106] OSPAR (2010). *Biodiversity Series: Background Document for Coral Gardens*.
[107] Henry, L.A. & Roberts, J.M. (2014). *Developing an interim technical definition for Coral Gardens specific for UK waters and its subsequent application to verify suspected records*. JNCC Report No. 507.

coral garden taxa the updated ES used in determining coral garden presence (*Virgularia mirabilis*, a sea pen, on page 150; *Primnoa* and *Dendronephthya*, soft corals, on page 225). The updated ES's own multivariate analyses indicated the presence of sensitive, slow-growing soft coral species throughout much of the project area that would be significantly impacted by the installation of subsea infrastructure.[108]

C. Relevant information for the Secretary of State's decision-making on the Rosebank Project

76. The Further Information provides "*updated information*" for the SoS to consider when reaching a decision on whether or not to agree to the grant of consent for the Rosebank Project. These claims require further scrutiny and are in parts misleading.

Scrutiny needed of claims regarding jobs

77. The Further Information highlights the 2,000 jobs that the Rosebank Project will reportedly create, however, it is important to clarify the type of employment this figure refers to:

    a. it includes not just direct jobs working on the Rosebank Project, and indirect jobs in its supply chain, but also assumptions about the induced jobs the Rosebank Project would create;

    b. it includes jobs created outside of the UK; and

    c. it refers primarily to the short term construction phase in the peak of development, which does not represent long-term job opportunities.

78. While the Rosebank Project will create jobs, by employing a range of varied figures and referring to job creation units using "*man-years of full-time work*", it is unclear in the Further Information how many long-term direct, indirect, and induced jobs it will respectively create in the UK.[109]

Scrutiny needed on claims around local supply chain investment

79. While the Further Information makes claims about the Rosebank Project benefitting ports, fabrication facilities and using local content, Equinor UK Limited does not make any explicit commitments to investments in any of the above.[110]

80. Shetland's involvement in the Rosebank Project appears to have been largely confined to basic port logistics, with Lerwick Harbour used as a marshalling yard for project equipment. As such, the closest community to the development has seen limited opportunity to benefit from long term jobs, revenues or supply chain capacity

[108] Equinor, above note 83, p.152.
[109] Equinor, above note 89, para. 3.3.
[110] Equinor, above note 89, paras 3.5-3.10.

building. Equinor UK Limited's assertions about local supply chains benefiting from its investment should, therefore, be subject to close scrutiny.

Potential negative impact on UK tax revenues

81. The Further Information states that the UK Government stands to gain substantial tax revenues from the Rosebank Project which would be lost if it does not proceed.[111] However, this underplays the risk that the UK Government could make a substantial net tax loss on the profits from the field. Despite the Energy Profits Levy (**EPL**), generous tax breaks also mean the UK public in effect shoulders more than 80% of the costs of developing new fields.

82. According to analysis by Uplift and WWF Norway, the Rosebank Project could result in a net loss of over £250 million to the UK Treasury, while the field's owners would earn £1.5 billion in profit.[112] This is because Equinor UK Limited will make most of its investment while the generous tax reliefs that are part of the EPL are switched on, but it will generate most of its profit after 2030, when the EPL is no longer in effect. If the EPL comes to an end earlier than is currently planned, then the tax take from the project could be even lower. In order to calculate these figures, WWF Norway evaluated the projected financial outcomes of the Rosebank oil field using Rystad Energy data on production volumes and investment timelines. While previous exploratory costs are excluded from this analysis due to their relatively small size, the full investment costs from 2023 onward are included.[113]

83. Furthermore, the UK's decommissioning relief mechanism allows costs related to dismantling and cleaning up offshore fields to be deducted against current and past profits.[114] When decommissioning happens at the end of a project, the costs are deductible from taxable profits. If the company no longer has enough profits to be offset, it can carry back those costs to earlier years of profit and claim a repayment of the tax it paid in the past. As a result, while a project may generate tax receipts during operation, the Government will later forgo or repay a substantial portion of that when decommissioning occurs. The effective tax rate can, therefore, be substantially lower than the headline rate of 78% referred to in the Further Information.[115]

Misleading claims on energy security

84. The Further Information claims that the Rosebank Project will help to reduce the UK's net-import gap for fossil fuels consumed in the UK.[116] However, it acknowledges that the majority of the oil produced by the Rosebank Project will be sold on the international market and exported.[117] Across the whole of the North Sea, more than

[111] Equinor, above note 89, paras 4.1.-4.4.
[112] Jones D. & Lysta G. *Rosebank: private profit, public risk*, Uplift & WWF Norway, 19 June 2025.
[113] For more information on the methodology see: Jones D & Lysta G, above note 112.
[114] HMRC (2016). *Oil and Gas companies: tax relief for decommissioning expenditure*.
[115] Equinor, above note 89, para. 4.4.
[116] Equinor, above note 89, paras 1.6-1.10.
[117] Equinor, above note 89, para. 1.8.

80% of oil produced is exported.[118] This means that the Rosebank Project's oil will do little to reduce the UK's import dependency.

85. The Rosebank Project does contain a small amount of gas, which will partly be used in domestic gas supply. However, according to official projections, even if new North Sea fields such as the Rosebank Project are developed, the UK's reliance on imported gas is set to rise from 55% today to more than two-thirds dependent by 2030, and over 90% dependent by 2050.[119] The Rosebank Project itself has the potential to reduce annual gas import dependency by just 1% a year on average.[120]

86. Given the small amount of gas that the Rosebank Project might produce, and the fact that the price of gas is set by international markets, the Rosebank Project's gas would do next to nothing to reduce the UK's current vulnerability to global gas price shocks. As the IEA makes clear, "*new conventional field approvals cannot provide immediate relief for tight markets and may well make the later stages of the transition even more challenging*".[121]

87. Instead, the only way to lower bills, increase reliability and ensure energy security is to transition to clean energy made in the UK. This is further highlighted in the IEA's WEO, which shows that a NZE Scenario can lead to the lowest household bills - in comparison to other scenarios - through greater efficiency and lower fuel costs and increases overall energy system resilience, among others.[122]

Climate safety is more affordable than continued fossil fuel dependence

88. In addition to posing numerous threats to society, including the food system, biodiversity, infrastructure and human health, climate change creates significant costs for businesses, households and public services by undermining and disrupting crucial sectors of the economy.[123] Impacts on various sectors can, therefore, be translated into loss of socioeconomic welfare and reported as an equivalent loss of the UK's GDP.[124] Depending on the model used to estimate the macroeconomic impacts of climate change, the scale of the potential losses varies, and could be systematically underestimated if global weather impacts have not been included.[125]

89. Based on existing policies in 2022, "*the total cost of climate change damages to the UK are projected to increase from 1.1% of GDP at present to 3.3% by 2050 and at least 7.4% by 2100*".[126] Under a current policy scenario from 2025 to 2034 without further

[118] *UK's North Sea fossil fuel exports have soared despite licencing bonanza*, Global Witness, 19 January 2024.
[119] Duhig H. *Why Trump is wrong on North Sea oil and gas*, Uplift, 23 July 2025.
[120] Duhig H, above note 119.
[121] IEA (2023), above note 36, p.77.
[122] IEA, above note 8.
[123] Rising J *et al* (2022). *What will climate change cost the UK? A study of climate risks, impacts and mitigation for the net-zero transition*. London: Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science, p.1.
[124] Rising J *et al*, above note 123; Note that the sectors included are drought and river floods; agriculture; livestock and fisheries; ecosystems; energy supply and demand; labour productivity; health; coastal impacts; and trade.
[125] Neal T *et al* (2025). Reconsidering the macroeconomic damage of severe warming, *Environ, Res. Lett.* 20: 044029.
[126] Rising J *et al*, above note 123.

measures taken, the average climate damage cost per household is £38,247 for this timeframe.[127] In 2025 alone, UK households face £3,000 in climate damage costs.[128] If strong mitigation measures are taken, the UK has the possibility to reduce the impacts of climate change damages from 7.4% to 2.4% of GDP by 2100.[129] Moreover, cutting the UK's emissions by 87% by 2040 could lead to a reduction of household costs by £1,400 a year by 2040 as the transition to clean energy reduces heating and motoring costs.[130]

90. More recent data from the Office for Budget Responsibility (**OBR**) confirms these earlier findings, showing that the cost of cutting emissions to net zero is significantly smaller than the economic damages of failing to act.[131] Additionally, the IEA's WEO spells out that taking ambitious measures and ensuring climate safety is more affordable than continued fossil fuel dependence (see above at paragraph 87), which would only worsen climate change impacts and consequently increase climate damage costs.

91. It is, therefore, clear that climate inaction will cost the UK more than climate action. The urgency to act now and to keep the global temperature as low as possible is highlighted in the IEA's WEO. The report states that because of the delay in reducing emissions as well as the "*continued high levels of emissions and recent investments in emissions-intensive infrastructure, temporarily exceeding the 1.5°C threshold is virtually certain. Even pathways that limit this overshoot to less than about 0.1°C, i.e. IPCC limited overshoot pathways, have slipped out of reach*".[132] To reach those, global CO_2 emissions would need to reach net zero in the mid- to late-2030s.[133] Plainly speaking, this would require "*a fall in emissions of around 3.5 Gt CO_2 per year - twice the drop seen in 2020 related to the Covid-19 pandemic - which would have to continue every year for at least the next decade*".[134]

92. Thus, it is a critical moment to not approve new oil and gas fields, including the Rosebank Project, but rather to scale up ambitions to limit global warming to the Paris Agreement's primary temperature goal of 1.5°C.

Conclusion

93. We consider the Further Information for the Rosebank Project to be inadequate and the Project unfit for approval in light of the significant effects of the Project's scope 3 emissions on the climate, the significant effects of the Project's upstream emissions

[127] *UK households facing £3,000 climate damage costs this year*, Global Witness, 15th April 2025.
[128] Global Witness, above note 127.
[129] Rising J *et al*, above note 123.
[130] Global Witness, above note 127.
Evans S, Gabbatiss J, Lempriere M (2025). *CCC: Reducing emissions 87% by 2040 would help 'cut household costs by £1,400*, *Carbon Brief*, 26th February 2025.
[131] Office for Budget Responsibility (2025). *Fiscal risks and sustainability*.
[132] IEA (2025), above note 8, p.316-317.
[133] IEA (2025), above note 8, p.317.
[134] IEA (2025), above note 8, p.317.

and significant effects of the Project on the marine environment, and the submitted other relevant information which requires further scrutiny, and is in parts misleading.

94. As set out throughout this submission, the scientific evidence is clear that new oil and gas production is not compatible with a 1.5°C or 2°C pathway. The world's fossil fuel production gap necessitates a decline in production, while approval of the Rosebank Project could lead to an increase of production. Meeting the UK's commitments under the Paris Agreement means no new oil and gas fields should be approved for development. Approval of the Rosebank Project would be directly contrary to the actions required for the UK to meet its national and international climate change commitments, and would undermine its climate leadership position.

95. On this basis, consent for the Rosebank Project should not be granted.

96. Please do not hesitate to contact Alina Holzhausen (alina@upliftuk.org) and Penelope Gane (penelope@upliftuk.org) for further information on issues raised in this correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

Uplift
www.upliftuk.org