



By: TA | AP Insight

UK government approves a natural gas project despite environmental concerns



The U.K. government approved a **natural gas project** off Scotland's coast over the objections of environmental groups on Wednesday, saying it would improve energy security even as the country transitions to renewable sources.

Gas from the Jackdaw field east of Aberdeen, which was stalled by a court ruling in 2024, is expected to start flowing into the U.K. gas distribution network later this year.

The government said that it will reduce reliance on foreign energy threatened by the Iran war and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Authorities have yet to rule on the Rosebank project west of the Shetland Islands, which is expected to produce mainly crude oil.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham said that the decision would “protect hundreds of jobs and help keep millions of homes warm this winter.”

Burnham said that the government wanted to maximize the existing energy reserves in the United Kingdom at a time when people are struggling, but that it also remained “committed to moving towards renewable energy” and reaching net zero emissions by 2050.

Local sources

Jackdaw and Rosebank have been the subject of intense debate in the U.K. and beyond, with U.S. President Donald Trump among those who have piled pressure on Burnham to grant permissions for them.

On Wednesday, Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that the approval for the Jackdaw field was “great news.”

“The U.K. has started drilling in the North Sea, one of the greatest and most prosperous areas of OIL in the World. They should go FULL BLAST,” he wrote.

Supporters say that the U.K. will continue to need oil and gas to power industry and heat

homes while the country moves toward using more renewable energy, such as wind and nuclear power, and that it's better to use local sources than rely on foreign supplies.

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The government said that Jackdaw would make a “small but meaningful” contribution to the nation's energy security, accounting for about 5% of U.K. gas production during the 11-year life of the project.

But it acknowledged that the project wouldn't eliminate Britain's need for imported gas or reduce prices, which are set by international markets.

Climate commitments

Environmental activists and some members of the governing Labour Party argue that the projects are at odds with efforts to **reduce the use of fossil fuels** and combat climate change.

They warn that approving the project would breach the United Kingdom's national and international climate commitments and generate more carbon emissions while bringing little benefit to the public.

This decision will only support a tiny number of jobs – Kate Norgrove

“The truth is that this decision will only support a tiny number of jobs, do nothing to lower prices, barely move the needle on growth, and undermine the U.K.'s climate leadership,” said Kate Norgrove, chief impact officer of the nonprofit group WWF-UK.

Legal challenges

While Jackdaw was approved by a previous **Conservative-led government** in 2022, the decision was stalled by legal challenges.

The Court of Session in Edinburgh, Scotland, ruled last year that both Jackdaw and Rosebank had been unlawfully approved, because the government had failed to consider the carbon emissions generated by burning gas from the projects when it assessed their environmental impact.



The government remains committed to eliminating net carbon emissions by 2050 - Miatta Fahnbulleh

After further review, Energy Minister Miatta Fahnbulleh approved the project on Wednesday.

“This decision will support the country’s energy security with homegrown gas this winter and help minimize the U.K.’s use of imported higher emission fuels as we continue our transition to renewables and nuclear,” Fahnbulleh said in a statement.

Fahnbulleh said that the government remains committed to eliminating net carbon emissions by 2050 and ending the approval of new oil and gas licenses.

Both Jackdaw and Rosebank are being developed by Adura, a joint venture of U.K.-based energy company Shell and Norwegian firm Equinor.

Neil McCulloch, Adura’s chief executive, said the decision on Jackdaw was a matter of urgency, because the project was ready to come on line this winter. Government officials have more time to rule on Rosebank, because

it won’t be ready to begin production until next year.

“We anticipate that the decision will be made positively, and we continue with development of the field,” he told the BBC.