

North Sea Future Board – Thursday 29 January 2026

Attendees:

- Michael Shanks (Chair) – Minister for Energy, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
- Gillian Martin – Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy, Scottish Government
- Stuart Payne, CEO, NSTA
- John Boland, Regional Officer, Unite
- Darren Procter, National Secretary, RMT
- Claire Greer, Regional Organiser, GMB Scotland
- Dave Whitehouse, CEO, OEUK
- Jim Savege, CEO, Aberdeenshire Council
- Maggie McGinlay, CEO, ETZ Ltd
- Claire Mack, CEO, Scottish Renewables
- Jane Cooper, Deputy CEO, RenewableUK
- Kevin Keable, Chair, East of England Energy Group
- Rich Denny, Managing Director, Northern Endurance Partnership
- Joanne Leng, CEO, NOF
- Olivia Powis, CEO, Carbon Capture Storage Association
- Sam Long, CEO, Decom Mission
- Neil McCulloch, CEO, Adura
- Sarah Moore, CEO, Peterson Logistics
- Rob Gilbert, Director of Supply Chain, Great British Energy (in place of Dan McGrail)

Supporting officials:

- Vicky Dawe, Director, Energy Development, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
- Rodney Berkeley, Director, Infrastructure and Technology, Department for Business and Trade

Apologies:

- Dan McGrail, CEO, Great British Energy
- Chris McDonald – Minister for Industry, Department for Business and Trade

Also in attendance, were Board Secretariat officials from Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Minutes:

Agenda Item 1: Introduction and Reviewing Progress

The meeting opened with Minister Shanks welcoming members and emphasising the collective expertise assembled to support delivery of the vision for the North Sea. He highlighted the *North Sea Future Plan* as a pragmatic and ambitious framework for the energy transition, and encouraged the Board to work collaboratively, engage actively, and maintain constructive challenge in line with the agreed ways of working.

Gillian Martin, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy, expressed her support for the Board's aims and underlined the importance of a successful transition for Aberdeen and Scotland. She noted the need to manage change in the oil and gas sector carefully as renewable energy grows.

Stuart Payne provided reflections from the perspective of his role as co-chair of the North Sea Transition Forum, outlining its continued role, including of its Taskforces and the opportunity for the new Board to identify clear priorities and deliver tangible outcomes.

DESNZ introduced the reviewing progress item, presenting a draft dashboard designed to summarise progress against actions in the *North Sea Future Plan* and provide a broader assessment across key themes including investment, workforce and supply chain, to support the Board in identifying any barriers to progress.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Members highlighted the importance of effectively tracking the progress of the transition, particularly in relation to the workforce. It was noted that while supporting young people entering the sector is important, attention must be given to existing workers to ensure they are not left behind.
- The Board discussed the value of translating the broader vision into clear, measurable outcomes – such as the creation of high-quality jobs, economic growth, and benefits for regions across the UK.
- Concerns were raised about challenges in filling vacancies across energy sectors in some locations, with an emphasis on improving the attractiveness of roles to people of all ages. Members stressed the need to understand the causes of any job losses, identify skills gaps, and better connect displaced workers with new opportunities.
- It was also noted that similar issues had been raised in recent discussions with skills providers, highlighting the need to build on existing initiatives and ensure efforts are targeted where they can have the greatest impact.

Agenda Item 2: Supply Chain Workstream

Minister Shanks introduced the supply chain workstream, noting its importance due to the significant number of jobs that it supports. He observed that substantial activity is already under way by other organisations and groups and stressed the need for the Board to bring this work together in a coherent way and to avoid duplication.

An overview of current supply chain priorities in the NSTF Supply Chain and Export Taskforce was provided.

It was suggested that this Board could support long-term messaging to build confidence in the project pipeline, provide a forum for raising barriers to investment, and examine the sequencing of the project pipeline to ensure value from existing assets.

During discussion, members reflected on the differing levels of policy certainty across energy sectors. Several contributions focused on the scale of opportunity for the supply chain and the importance of assessing the size of future markets across technologies.

Participants highlighted the importance of retaining existing supply chain capability, including transferable skills and expertise, and the value of bringing together information on people, competencies and capacity. The need for approaches that consider all sectors collectively was raised, alongside the importance of supporting companies – many of which are SMEs – to access near-term opportunities efficiently.

There was wide agreement on the importance of visibility and credibility in the project pipeline, and on the need for clearer information about forthcoming projects, local content expectations, and the wider investment pipeline. Increased visibility of upcoming work would support supply chain planning and stability.

It was observed that greater industrial intelligence could help identify which businesses require support and how public and private investment could deliver maximum impact. Members also suggested that understanding where the UK has the potential to be globally competitive would help inform future decision making.

Further points included the need for a better understanding of barriers causing project delays; and consideration of behaviours that underpin effective collaboration and delivery. The importance of ensuring that workforce planning aligned with the scale of change and that job quality is maintained throughout the transition was also raised.

In closing the discussion, Minister Shanks emphasised the value of developing a coherent narrative around a “one energy supply chain” and the need to draw together existing work rather than create new initiatives. He recognised the importance of project visibility in enabling the supply chain to plan effectively and noted the need to be proportionate when considering further data collection.

Agenda Item 3: Other priority workstreams

Minister Shanks invited the Board to identify one or two additional areas of focus to complement the supply chain workstream.

Members discussed the value of examining the project pipeline alongside expected skills needs, to support better alignment between future job opportunities and workforce capabilities. It was noted that understanding why some projects do not progress could provide useful insight.

The discussion highlighted a range of workforce related barriers, including retraining challenges, employment conditions, geography, and the large number of existing initiatives, which can create uncertainty for workers. Members suggested that improved coordination across forums and programmes could enhance clarity and confidence.

There was agreement on the benefit of identifying barriers to project delivery collectively, drawing lessons from both positive and negative experiences to help progress the pipeline. Visibility and medium-term certainty were seen as important for retaining specialist skills needed across the transition, including for CCUS.

Members also emphasised the importance of a clear and consistent narrative that recognises the continued role of parts of the energy sector during the transition. Early collaboration between Board members ahead of future meetings was suggested as a practical step.

Finally, members proposed that the Board should focus on areas where it can add distinct value, avoiding duplication of existing skills related work and seeking support in identifying where further attention is most needed.

The next meeting will be scheduled to take place in March 2026.