

North Sea Future Board – Thursday 19 March 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
- Pauline Innes, Director of Supply Chain and Decommissioning, NSTA (in place of Stuart Payne)
- Neil McCulloch, CEO, Adura
- Katy Heidenreich, Supply Chain and People Director, OEUK (in place of Dave Whitehouse)
- John Boland, Regional Officer, Unite
- Claire Greer, Regional Organiser, GMB Scotland
- Jim Savege, CEO, Aberdeenshire Council
- Maggie McGinlay, CEO, ETZ Ltd
- Jane Cooper, Deputy CEO, RenewableUK
- Rich Denny, Managing Director, Northern Endurance Partnership
- Joanne Leng, CEO, NOF
- Olivia Powis, CEO, Carbon Capture Storage Association
- Sam Long, CEO, Decom Mission
- Sarah Moore, CEO, Peterson Logistics
- Rob Gilbert, Director of Supply Chain, Great British Energy (in place of Dan McGrail)
- Angela Scott, CEO, Aberdeen City Council
- Claire Mack, CEO, Scottish Renewables
- Kevin Keable, Chair, East of England Energy Group
- Darren Procter, National Secretary, RMT

Supporting officials:

- Amy Jenkins, Deputy Director – Private Investment, PuFins and Blended Finance (DESNZ)
- Hugo Jones, Deputy Director, Office for Clean Energy Jobs (DESNZ)
- Matt Taylor, Director, CCUS Strategy and Policy (DESNZ) (in place of Vicky Dawe)

Apologies:

- Chris McDonald (Minister for Industry, DBT)
- Dan McGrail, CEO, Great British Energy
- Stuart Payne, CEO, NSTA
- Dave Whitehouse, CEO, OEUK

- Vicky Dawe, Director, Energy Development, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

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

Item 1 & 2 - Opening remarks and sector updates

The meeting was opened by Minister Shanks who, after welcoming everyone, emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum on delivery against a backdrop of ongoing geopolitical uncertainty and pressure on global energy markets. He underlined the need for the Board to focus on practical enablers of delivery, particularly where coordinated action across sectors, institutions and delivery bodies could help unlock progress.

The Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy, Gillian Martin MSP, apologised for not being able to be at the meeting in person but said she was looking forward to the discussion.

Minister Shanks went on to update the Board on relevant policy and programme developments. These included the decision to accelerate Allocation Round 8 to July, the introduction of the Clean Industry Bonus alongside the Fair Work Charter, the opening of Great British Energy supply chain funding to applications, and the launch of the Oil and Gas Transition Training Fund.

Members then provided several sector and regional updates:

- CCUS update - noted continued progress across a several CCUS projects and discussed planned engagement with European emitters on the potential for UK carbon storage to play a wider international role. It was recognised that CCUS delivery presents distinct challenges in relation to skills, workforce availability and supply chain capacity, and that these issues warrant continued attention.
- Offshore wind update - considered the Industrial Growth Plan and emerging plans to update it, with particular emphasis on the role of clearer pipeline visibility and investment prioritisation in supporting the offshore wind supply chain.
- East of England update - skills shortages were highlighted, including acute shortages in trades such as welding. Emphasised the need to scale training provision, including foundational and entry-level courses, and to improve the quality, consistency, and usability of workforce data to support effective planning at national, regional and local levels.

Reflecting on the updates, Minister Shanks noted the interconnectedness of energy sub-sectors and highlighted that all the updates mentioned skills and supply chain.

He reiterated the importance of keeping the Board focused on genuinely cross-cutting issues and avoiding duplication with other established forums.

Item 3 - What success looks like

The Board discussed a draft paper intended to articulate a shared narrative for the NSF Board, with a small set of outcomes to support a more integrated “one energy system” approach. Minister Shanks noted that the paper was not an articulation of government policy and had been shared with members as it had been drafted by the sub-group.

Members welcomed the intent to provide greater clarity of purpose and direction, but stressed the importance of clearly defining and narrowing the scope of the paper to reflect what is realistically deliverable by the Board, and how progress would be measured over the short to medium term, including over three, six and twelve-month horizons.

Some members said that the statement should reflect energy security considerations alongside decarbonisation objectives. They noted the importance of getting the sequencing of the transition right and the risks, including to employment continuity, that could arise if upstream oil and gas activity wound down too quickly.

Investor confidence, cost considerations and funding constraints, and the importance of keeping consumer bills manageable were also highlighted. It was raised that the draft should more clearly reflect export opportunities and should place greater emphasis on the central role of workforce availability and supply chain capability in translating ambition into delivery.

There was strong agreement that any high-level articulation of success should be closely linked to practical delivery considerations and clearly understood responsibilities.

Minister Shanks concluded that adoption of a narrower scope (i.e. what does success look like for the Board) could help define practical outcomes. He said that an updated paper would be brought to the meeting in June for agreement.

Item 4 - Supply chain

The Board discussed and broadly agreed to the approach set out in the paper on supply chain.

Minister Shanks opened the session by saying that the supply chain is at the heart of what we are trying to do around jobs and, noting their integrated nature, said that we need to capitalise on shared opportunities across energy sub-sectors.

An update was provided on the North Sea Activity Plan which aims to improve pipeline visibility and certainty. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that any new product complements existing sources of information rather than duplicating them and highlighted the need for consistent terminology around project certainty and pipeline status to support a shared understanding across sectors. Members emphasised that providing visibility of the project pipeline alone, with no credibility or certainty, would not go far enough to support investment decisions and capacity planning.

It was noted that fragmented or inconsistent signals across energy sub-sectors can create uncertainty for investors and suppliers, with knock-on implications for workforce planning and supply chain resilience.

Different approaches to UK content and supply chain development were discussed, recognising that incentives, regulatory frameworks and business models vary significantly across energy sub-sectors and project types.

Members noted the need to better explain and coordinate the range of public finance and government support available to supply chain companies, including through clearer mapping of existing initiatives.

The value of a more joined-up communications approach to amplify positive energy sector news stories was also recognised.

Item 5 - Workforce

DESNZ introduced the paper on workforce and Minister Shanks said this is an issue that they need to get right, noting that government had put considerable resource behind the North Sea Jobs Service.

The Board discussed workforce planning in detail, focusing on the need for improved, accessible and credible data on current employment and future demand across the energy transition. Members stressed the importance of improving the clarity of published workforce figures, including greater transparency around how jobs are defined and counted across different parts of the energy system.

Members highlighted skills shortages across sectors and regions and emphasised that workforce planning must be grounded in credible data and transparent project

pipelines if employers, training providers and local areas are to plan effectively. Members noted a direct link between the willingness of employers to retrain and retain staff to their confidence in credible, sequenced project pipelines.

Retention within the energy sector was identified as an issue, alongside the need to better understand barriers to movement between roles, including terms and conditions.

Minister Shanks noted that the Office for Clean Energy Jobs has jurisdiction in England only and said that the Board should also consider Scottish Government workforce initiatives.

Item 6 - Barriers to project delivery

The Board discussed barriers affecting project delivery across the energy sector. Members highlighted the importance of proportionate and pro-growth, enabling regulation, effective coordination across government and delivery bodies, and commercial arrangements that support timely delivery without transferring disproportionate risk down supply chains.

It was noted that barriers can manifest differently across sectors and locations, and that practical case studies can be valuable in illustrating how these issues affect delivery on the ground.

Closing

The Minister thanked members for their contributions and reiterated the role of the secretariat in facilitating coordination and progress across the Board's priorities.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 18 June in the North-East of England.