

ROBERT LARGAN MP

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Thank you for contacting me on behalf of Hope Valley Climate Action, regarding the UK's Energy Security Strategy.

In light of high global energy prices, provoked by surging demand and Russia's unjustified invasion of Ukraine, the Prime Minister has been clear that it's right we move away from dependence on Russian gas and increase our self-reliance for energy security.

I welcome that the Government's Energy Security Strategy sets out plans to accelerate the deployment of wind, new nuclear, solar and hydrogen, while supporting the production of domestic oil and gas in the nearer term – which could see 95 per cent of electricity being low carbon by 2030.

The Government has already announced that the import of Russian oil and oil products will be phased out by the end of this year, which makes up roughly eight per cent of UK demand. Further, while the proportion of gas we import from Russia is less than four per cent, I know that the Government is keen to end this altogether. Recognising the importance of these fuels to our energy transition and energy security, and that producing gas domestically has a lower carbon footprint than importing, a licensing round for new North Sea oil and gas projects is planned to launch in Autumn.

I also warmly welcome the new ambition to produce up to 50GW of offshore wind by 2030 – more than enough to power every home in the UK – of which up to 5GW will come from floating offshore wind sites in deeper seas. This will be underpinned by new planning reforms to speed up approvals for new offshore wind farms. I know the Government is also looking to increase the UK's current solar capacity, which could grow up to 5 times by 2035, and aims to double our ambition for low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030.

The strategy will also see the acceleration of nuclear power, aiming to produce up to 24GW by 2050, which could mean delivering up to eight reactors, equivalent to one reactor a year instead of one a decade. My ministerial colleagues assure me that nuclear presents a safe, clean, and reliable source of power and I am encouraged that a new government body, Great British Nuclear, will be set up immediately to bring forward new projects, backed by substantial funding, including a £120 million Future Nuclear Enabling Fund.

I am sure you can understand that we cannot simply pull the plug on all fossil fuels overnight without this having a huge consequences all over Europe. However, the Government is going to make better use of the oil and gas in the UK by giving the energy fields of the North Sea a new lease of life.

The Energy Security Strategy builds on the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, and, together with the Net Zero Strategy, is driving an unprecedented £100 billion of private sector investment into new British industries and will support 480,000 new clean jobs by the end of the decade.

I am also glad that the Government is supportive of community energy. Ofgem has existing flexibility to award supply licences that are restricted to specified geographies and/or specified types of premises. Furthermore, following a consultation process, since February this year, Ofgem is welcoming applications from community-interest groups, co-operative societies and community-benefit societies to the industry voluntary redress scheme. This is enabling groups to apply for funds to deliver energy-related projects that support energy consumers in vulnerable situations, support decarbonisation and will benefit people in England, Scotland and Wales.

To support community energy projects, the Government has funded the Rural Community Energy Fund. This £10 million funding scheme was delivered through the Local Energy Hubs which support rural communities in England to develop renewable energy projects, which provide economic and social benefits to the community. Since its launch in 2019, the fund received 1,668 enquiries, 203 applications and awarded millions of pounds worth of grants to projects focusing on a variety of technologies, including solar, wind, low-carbon heating and electric vehicle charging.

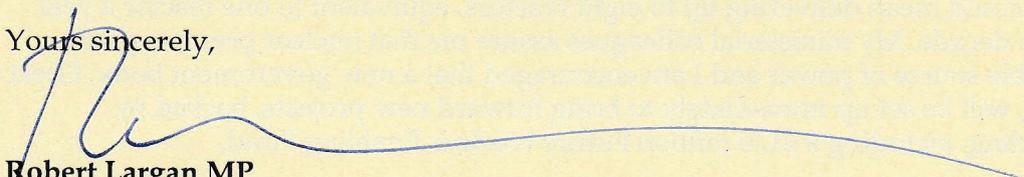
The Government has also introduced other UK-wide growth funding schemes, such as the Community Renewal Fund and the Towns Fund, through which it is enabling local areas to tackle net zero goals in ways that best suit their needs. In addition, I know the Government encourages community energy groups to work closely with their local authority to support the development of community energy projects within these schemes and plans to reintroduce the Community Energy Contact Group to strengthen engagement with the sector.

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Cleaner, more affordable, domestically produced energy will be key to boosting our long-term energy independence and prosperity, and I look forward to witnessing the Strategy's long-term benefits.

Should you have further enquiries on this or any other matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Largan MP
Member of Parliament for High Peak