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15 October 2022

Dear Edward,

I am writing to update you and the NZET Committee on the Scottish Government's preferred policy position on coal extraction, which will be published today.

As you will be aware, the Scottish Government is transitioning to a net zero emissions Scotland for the benefit of our environment, our people and our prosperity, with Scotland's ambitious climate change legislation setting a target date for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. This means that our contribution to climate change will end, definitively, within one generation.

In line with this commitment, our Programme for Government 2021/22 stated that "*unlimited extraction of fossil fuels is incompatible with our climate obligations and meeting the aims of the Paris Agreement*"; in a post-COP26 world, it is more important than ever that we move towards this goal at pace, and continue to put words into actions.

This can be clearly demonstrated in the Bute House Agreement, formalised in September 2021, which states that "*given the urgency of the climate emergency, we accept that countries around the world, including the UK, cannot continue with unlimited recovery of hydrocarbons if the aims of the Paris Agreement are to be met - we cannot ignore the concern that unlimited extraction of fossil fuels is simply incompatible with protecting the planet*".

The Scottish Government is undertaking a full policy development process in order to reach a finalised position on coal extraction in Scotland, in line with statutory requirements. Coal exploitation is a matter reserved to the UK Government, and the Coal Authority is responsible for licensing coal mining activity in Scotland. However, planning policy and determinations are devolved to the Scottish Government.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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Following a public call for evidence earlier this year, and having considered stakeholders' views and the evidence received alongside wider Scottish Government energy and climate change policies, I can confirm that our preferred policy position is **no support for coal extraction in Scotland**. The full preferred policy statement, including details of implementation, can be viewed on the Scottish Government website.

This preferred policy position is subject to statutory and other assessments before the policy-making process can be completed. The preferred policy position on coal extraction will be included in the impact assessments, including Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the wider Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, the draft of which is due to be published by the end of 2022. The finalised policy position will be confirmed on conclusion of this process.

**MICHAEL MATHESON MSP**

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