



The Scotsman, Times and Daily Mail have asked for a comment on the attached material gathered by the *These Islands* group, criticising the SG statistic – first set out in the 2010 offshore wind routemap – that “Scotland has an estimated 25% of Europe's offshore wind potential.”

The attached points to more recent examples of the 25% being used. “With Scotland enjoying a quarter of Europe’s wind potential.” – is referenced in NSET (p23).

The attached also contains Official-level comments, gathered under FOI, which suggest (to *These Island* and the journalist) that the 25% figure is outdated and the evidence base not strong enough to support the figure.

We’ve agreed the following response with Policy and SpAds. Grateful for Mr Matheson’s clearance, please.

**A Scottish Government Spokesperson said:**

“Our abundant natural resources, expertise and proven track record in decarbonisation make Scotland perfectly placed to become a global powerhouse of renewable energy.

“ScotWind, the world’s largest floating offshore leasing round, represents a massive step forward in delivering an energy revolution with ambitions to deliver 27.6 Gigawatts of power - nearly triple our renewable energy generation currently in operation.

“The statistic relating to Scotland having 25% of Europe's offshore wind potential was set out in a 2010 publication and was calculated accurately at the time. We recognise that changes in technology and use of marine space mean that this statistic now requires updating and will be undertaking work to update the figure. However, we are confident that Scotland remains at the forefront of the developing offshore wind industry in Europe.”

Thanks  
[redacted]

**From:** [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 08 November 2022 15:57

**To:** McFarlane J (John) (Special Adviser) <[redacted]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Communications Net Zero & Rural Affairs <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Palmer MR (Mike) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Hogg A (Andrew) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Low R (Ragne) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** SpAd View - Media Query - 25% of Europe's Offshore Wind Statistic - Various

Hi John

The Scotsman, Times and Daily Mail have asked for a comment on the attached material gathered by the *These Islands* group, criticising the SG statistic – first set out in the [2010 offshore wind routemap](#) – that “Scotland has an estimated 25% of Europe’s offshore wind potential.”

The attached points to more recent examples of the 25% being used. “With Scotland enjoying a quarter of Europe’s wind potential.” – is referenced in [NSET \(p23\)](#).

The attached also contains Official-level comments, gathered under FOI, which suggest (to *These Island* and the journalist) that the 25% figure is outdated and the evidence base not strong enough to support the figure.

We’ve agreed the following response with Policy. Grateful for a view, please.

[redacted]

Thanks

[redacted]

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**From:** [redacted]< [redacted]>  
**Sent:** 08 November 2022 10:59  
**To:** [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Wind energy potential 'debunked'

Hi [redacted],

As discussed, These Islands, a pro-union think-tank have given us sight of a new paper they are publishing tomorrow which debunks the claim Scotland has 25% of Europe's offshore wind energy potential.

The report is attached, but alongside the debunking of the claims themselves, I've got some additional questions around the internal communications on this question.

Specifically, these comments from officials:

"Whilst the 25% figure has been used in the past, we tend not to use this anymore. It has proved very difficult to source." (9th October 2020)

"the 25% estimate has never, to my knowledge, been properly sourced" (20th October 2020)

"Other than our recent exchanges on this request, of course, I've nothing to offer – my search of the G drive having unfortunately yielded up nothing more on the [redacted] study in 2001 and why it should have been associated with the “25%” estimate." (12th January 2021)

"Yes we did recycle those figures quite robotically without really checking them." (18th January 2021)"

Can you explain why, given the fact the figure has "never been properly sourced", it was repeated by senior Scottish Government politicians and published in papers such as the National Strategy for Economic Transformation?

Has the Government been misleading the public on Scotland's offshore wind potential for decades?

Why are civil servants repeating figures, in official documents, which don't stand up to scrutiny?

My deadline is 4pm today, please.

Best,

[redacted]--

[redacted] [redacted]

**Mobile:** [redacted]

**Parliament Phone:** [redacted]

@ [redacted]



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**From:** [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 08 November 2022 18:26

**To:** Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; McFarlane J (John) (Special Adviser) <John.McFarlane@gov.scot>

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**Subject:** RE: For Clearance - Media Query - 25% of Europe's Offshore Wind Statistic - Various

Thanks, Stuart. [redacted]

[redacted]  
[redacted]

**From:** Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <[redacted]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 08 November 2022 18:17  
**To:** [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; McFarlane J (John) (Special Adviser) <[redacted]@gov.scot>  
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**Subject:** RE: For Clearance - Media Query - 25% of Europe's Offshore Wind Statistic - Various

[redacted]

[redacted]

**From:** [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 08 November 2022 18:09  
**To:** Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; McFarlane J (John) (Special Adviser) <[redacted]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** Communications Net Zero & Rural Affairs <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Palmer MR (Mike) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Hogg A (Andrew) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Low R (Ragne) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: For Clearance - Media Query - 25% of Europe's Offshore Wind Statistic - Various

Removing PO, adding Media SpAds given the time.

[redacted] has followed-up up to ask – if we acknowledge the statistic requires updating, why were we still using it as recently as October? (Understand it was referenced in the Economy Prospectus).





*“We recognise that changes in technology and use of marine space mean that this statistic now requires updating and will be undertaking work to update the figure. However, we are confident that Scotland remains at the forefront of the developing offshore wind industry in Europe.”*

*[For The Herald only] “The validity of These Islands’ calculation is a matter for the organisation.”*

Thanks  
[redacted]

**From:** [redacted] <[redacted]@newsquest.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 10 November 2022 14:01  
**To:** [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: Cole-Hamilton demands SNP ministers correct the record for years of false claims

Hi [redacted],

Thanks for your time on the phone just now.

Probably easier to just send this on – which has all the details. Can I ask what the Scottish Government believes is the true figure – is the 4% to 6% figure by These Islands true?

I’ll have an online story soon which I can add a comment to. I will need something by the close of play today to be included in our print edition.

Many thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted]  
[redacted]  
The Herald

**From:** Media Team - Scottish Liberal Democrats <media@scotlibdems.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 10 November 2022 13:00  
**To:** [redacted] <[redacted]@newsquest.co.uk>  
**Subject:** Cole-Hamilton demands SNP ministers correct the record for years of false claims

**Scottish**   
Liberal Democrats

**Scottish Liberal Democrats**  
**Contact**[redacted]  
**Embargo: Immediate**

## **Cole-Hamilton demands SNP ministers correct the record for years of false claims**

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton has today raised a point of order in the Scottish Parliament calling for the Scottish Government to correct the record over years of misleading claims about Scottish wind power.

### **Mr Cole-Hamilton said:**

“Presiding Officer, I seek your guidance on the procedures surrounding the correcting of the Official Report.

“Yesterday, it was revealed by the thinktank These Islands that a key government statistic is false.

“It is a claim which will be familiar to every single MSP in this Chamber – that Scotland has 25% of Europe’s potential offshore wind resource.

“Over the years this has been referenced countless times both inside and outside this Parliament by SNP ministers and MSPs.

“In this Chamber they include successive environment secretaries, First Minister Alex Salmond and deputy First Minister John Swinney.

“The current First Minister, Constitution Secretary and Net Zero Secretary have made the claim to other audiences. And it was reheated just yesterday by Green Environment Minister Lorna Slater in the Edinburgh Evening News.

“But it is a statistic that has now been proven to be false - a bogus analysis of a mixture of reports dating all the way back to 1993, when the technology was in its infancy, and using a definition of Europe that excluded renewable powerhouses like Sweden, Norway and Finland. It wasn’t the case that it was accurate in 2010 as a spokesperson claimed this week - it was never accurate.

“Civil servants have been privately warning against its use for at least two years, warning it has and I quote “never been properly sourced” and that the figures had been and I again quote: “recycled robotically without really checking them”.

“The true figure for Scotland’s share of offshore wind potential is thought to be around 5% yet still the 25% claim appeared in the Finance Secretary’s National Strategy for Economic Transformation this March, and again multiple times in the SNP-led debate on independence in the House of Commons last week from SNP leader Ian Blackford, Ronnie Cowan, Kirsten Oswald.

“I cannot recall a comparable situation, where a completely fictitious statistic has been relied on so often and so widely.

“This matters because this Scottish Government has put this claim at the heart of the debates around Scotland’s energy security, on independence and on meeting our climate targets.

“I fully support the expansion of Scotland’s renewable sector and I desperately want to see Scotland fulfil our renewable potential. But the strong case for that isn’t helped when the figures used by the Scottish Government leave it open to the charge of misleading and misrepresenting.

“So Presiding Officer, can I seek your guidance on how the Official Report should be corrected in all of these circumstances – where there has been a pattern of misinformation dating back over a decade, leaving bogus claims littered across the transcripts of the numerous sittings of this Parliament?

“And can I ask whether any member of the Scottish Government has approached you Presiding Officer about making a statement to correct these records, given the provisions of Point 5 of the

Guidance on the Corrections of Inaccuracies of Information Provided in Parliamentary Proceedings?”

**Following confirmation from the Presiding Officer that the government has not sought to make a statement correcting the record, Mr Cole-Hamilton added:**

“The Scottish Government should immediately come to Parliament and make a statement confirming that they won’t use this statistic again and that it’s previous usage was inaccurate.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

A comprehensive debunking of the Scottish Government’s claims can be found [here](#).

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