

Government must be 'forced to act' to save Grangemouth refinery, union says



Our unmissable weekly email of all the gossip, rumours and covert goings-on inside the Square Mile

Sign up

I would like to be emailed about offers, event and updates from Evening Standard. Read our [privacy notice](#).

Union leaders have insisted the Labour [Government](#) “must be forced to act” to save Scotland’s only oil refinery.

Sharon Graham, the general secretary of the [Unite](#) union branded the planned closure of the refinery at Grangemouth a “horrific act of industrial vandalism” as she insisted that “the Government must make the necessary investments to safeguard” its future.

Her comments came as Unite [Scottish](#) secretary Derek Thomson attacked Prime Minister Sir [Keir Starmer](#) and Scotland’s First Minister John Swinney, saying they had “contributed ‘net zero’ in support of the Grangemouth workers”.

Earlier this month, bosses at Petroineos confirmed the refinery will close in the second quarter of 2025, with the

loss of 400 jobs.

How can Scotland's only oil refinery be allowed to close? This is an horrific act of industrial vandalism, and once again the politicians have let us down

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham

Ahead of the change – which will see Grangemouth operate as an import-only terminal – the Scottish and UK governments promised a joint £100 million support package.

But Ms Graham, addressing more than 150 Unite delegates at the union's Scottish policy conference in Dundee, hit out at the UK Government, attacking both the Prime Minister and [Ed Miliband](#), his Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

She insisted: "It's time to put Ed Miliband and Keir on notice: Grangemouth must be saved.

"The Government must make the necessary investments to safeguard its future. Labour must be forced to act."

The Unite general secretary added: "Grangemouth is making net zero look far from a just transition, more a jobless transition."

Ms Graham continued: "How can Scotland's only oil refinery be allowed to close? This is a horrific act of industrial vandalism, and once again the politicians have let us down."

She hit out at the "missing politicians", including Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar and Scottish First Minister John Swinney in her attack.

Mr Thomson said both the Scottish and UK Governments had "failed miserably to persuade Petroineos to extend the lifespan of the refinery",

Referring to the Prime Minister and the Scottish First Minister, he added: "In the first real test they have contributed 'net zero' in support of the Grangemouth workers."

Mr Thomson branded Petroineos's decision to close the refinery as "premature and needless", adding: "Make no mistake about this – the refinery's closure is an economic earthquake which will be felt for generations to come."

He also claimed politicians were making a "choice to stand by and do nothing".



Unite union general secretary Sharon Graham branded the planned closure of the refinery at Grangemouth a 'horrific act of industrial vandalism' (PA)

PA Archive

The union's Scottish secretary said: "We need to ask the politicians, including John Swinney, Ed Miliband and Anas Sarwar, 'why wouldn't they take a transition stake to protect the jobs and wider supply chain at Grangemouth?'"

He also warned the party that "if Scottish Labour won't lift a

finger to support our members at Grangemouth” and other communities facing industrial closures, then “Unite won’t be lifting a finger to support Scottish Labour at the next elections”.

“Those Labour candidates who stand up for workers and back policies which protect jobs will get our backing in Scotland, of that those candidates can be assured,” he added.

“But we can’t continue to remain silent while a Scottish Labour leadership is in hiding over its broken promises over Grangemouth.”

Turning on the Scottish Government, he accused SNP ministers of “sleepwalking through the halls of Holyrood while our members are being thrown on an industrial scrapheap”.

Mr Thomson insisted Unite would be “taking the fight” to SNP ministers over public services, telling them: “The hand-wringing inside Holyrood will not cut it anymore, moving into the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2026.

“We will be taking the fight to them on the cuts across our public services. They have taken the gloves off in terms of cutting services but it will be Unite who punches back to secure proper public services and to ensure staff are rewarded.”

A Scottish Labour spokesperson said: “Labour will always stand up for working people.

“The UK Labour Government and the Scottish Government have acted decisively to support the workforce at Grangemouth and have announced a £100m support package for Grangemouth.

“These plans include investment in new energy projects, a new technology centre to support the use of low carbon technologies, career and skills support for the existing workforce and an employment hub to support emerging energy

sectors.

“The UK Government will also explore potential opportunities for Labour’s national wealth fund in clean technologies like hydrogen and clean aviation fuel.

“In the short period of time since the UK Labour Government was elected, it has acted with urgency to help secure a strong, industrial future for Grangemouth.

“Work is also under way to establish GB Energy here in Scotland, which will help to protect Scotland’s industrial base, secure the well-paid jobs of the future, and deliver a just transition to net zero.

“Labour will continue to work with workers and trade unions to deliver the jobs our country needs.”

A spokesperson for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero said: “The Energy Secretary has been clear that Petroineos’s recent confirmation of the closure of Grangemouth oil refinery is deeply disappointing and we stand with the Grangemouth workforce in these difficult times.

“Our joint investment plan, including a £100 million package, will help the workforce find good alternative jobs and support the local community – as well as helping to secure a viable industrial future for the Grangemouth site.

“The Government has a non-negotiable commitment to securing a proud future for the North Sea, and we are engaging with industry, workers, trade unions and civil society to provide certainty through a phased and responsible transition.”

A Scottish Government spokesperson said: “Ministers have made clear their disappointment that Petroineos has made the commercial decision to cease refining at the site. Despite sustained and concerted efforts by both governments, Petroineos have opted not to continue operations at the site

for longer to allow a longer transition timeline for the workers.

“Our focus now is on delivering immediate support for affected workers to secure new jobs and give access any necessary training and to secure a sustainable, just transition for the wider Grangemouth industrial cluster.

“With the UK Government, we are exploring viable options for the future of the site via the Project Willow cross-site study and look forward to exploring routes to supporting the future phases of low carbon projects at Grangemouth via the national wealth fund.”