

LONDON, April 25 (Reuters) - Greenpeace's legal [challenge against the British government](#) over its invitation to oil and gas explorers last year to apply for licences in the North Sea can proceed to a full hearing, a judge at London's High Court ruled on Tuesday.

Last year, Britain held its first oil and gas exploration licensing round since 2019, with the government saying it was looking to boost domestic hydrocarbon output as Europe weans itself off Russian fuel and after energy prices spiked.

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Greenpeace says the government and the oil and gas regulator NSTA should take into account the emissions from burning the oil and gas produced as a result of the licensing round, rather than merely the emissions from the extraction process.

"Ministers will now be forced to justify in front of a judge why they want to unleash a new drilling frenzy in the North Sea," said Greenpeace UK climate campaigner Philip Evans.

In a written argument, the defendants' lawyers had said the government believed "there was an insufficient causal connection between the extraction of oil and gas and the downstream emissions arising from its consumption to enable a meaningful assessment of the environmental effects of the latter."

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A spokesperson for the government did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Ahead of Tuesday's decision, a spokesperson pointed to the importance of energy security, adding that despite significant investment in renewable and nuclear projects "the transition to non-fossil forms of energy cannot happen overnight."

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