

Statement by Kirsty Clough, Weald Action Group, 27th July 2021 (APP/B3600/W/21/3268579)

I wish to challenge the assertions made by Nigel Moore in his proof of evidence on behalf of UKOG that UK National Energy Policy establishes a strategic need for further onshore exploration of **conventional** hydrocarbons.

The [2020 Energy White paper](#): Powering our Net Zero Future, published in December 2020, presents the latest government thinking on how energy policy will develop in the coming years. Oil and gas is covered in chapter 6. This chapter focuses almost exclusively on the large offshore sector and the objective of ensuring the UK Continental Shelf is a net zero emissions basin by 2050. The onshore sector is barely referred to. It is mentioned once in relation to its size relative to the offshore sector (on page 134), and once regarding the impacts of Covid-19 on the industry (on page 135).

In May this year my local MP Jeremy Hunt was asked by another of his constituents to ask the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to identify Government statements or policy documents setting out what the Government would regard as its current energy policy relating to UK oil and gas.

The response that was passed onto us from The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP dated 21 May referred to:

- the [written Ministerial Statement on Energy Policy from 24 March](#) by the Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, regarding the North Sea Transition Deal and the Review of Future Licensing of Offshore Oil and Gas; and
- the [press release](#) and [policy paper](#) relating to the North Sea transition deal.

I think the usual procedure would be to provide a copy of this letter. As this inquiry is being held online I circulated a copy of this letter, including the documents referred to, via email to the relevant inquiry participants before I started to make this statement.

Neither the Ministerial Statement, press release or policy paper relate to the onshore oil and gas sector. Where the onshore sector is briefly mentioned in the policy paper this is largely in relation to onshore facilities associated with offshore production.

In short, there is no mention of the strategic importance or need for further onshore **conventional** oil and gas exploration in current Government energy policy. Indeed, previous government support for onshore fossil fuel exploration stemmed from the possibility of exploiting the potentially extensive **unconventional** onshore fossil fuel resource. This is evidenced in the final Government [Annual Energy Statement issued in 2014](#), the [2012 Gas Generation Strategy](#) and the [2012 Energy Security Strategy](#) all of which site the potential strategic importance of unconventional shale gas. The extraction of these resources has now been ruled out, at least in the short term, by the 2019 moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. This moratorium appears to have marked the end of the UK Governments strategic interest in the onshore oil and gas sector.

In conclusion there is no current Government Energy policy that I am aware of that can be used to back up a view that there is a strategic need for further exploitation of **conventional onshore** fossil fuel reserves.