

## Objection from Weald Action Group to the application from Egdon Resources to keep the Waddock Cross oil site open for a further 10 years (P/VOC/2023/02762)

October 2023

The Weald Action Group<sup>1</sup> is an umbrella for local groups campaigning against all forms of onshore oil and gas extraction across the Weald and the Isle of Wight in the Southeast of England.



Egdon Resources state that whilst the current application is for a ten-year extension to an existing dormant site, if successful, they plan to submit a further application for two more wells with the intention of resuming commercial oil production. Indeed, if the oil yield shown in reservoir modelling cited in the Planning Statement is achieved Waddock Cross could become one of the largest onshore oil production sites in the UK.

We, therefore, object to this application in the strongest terms. It is clearly a steppingstone to reevaluating the sites commercial potential with the prospect of significant oil production resulting in significant greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts. These two stages of the planning process are inextricably linked.

The climate crisis is already upon us. Just a few weeks ago at a high-level summit on climate change the UN's Secretary General António Guterres warned that *"humanity has opened the gates of hell..... Horrendous heat is having horrendous effects. Distraught farmers watching crops carried away by floods. Sweltering temperatures spawning disease....."*<sup>2</sup>.

With the burning of fossil fuels a key culprit we can no longer allow the further exploitation of these resources.

Furthermore, given that Egdon Resources' permission to develop the site expired in June this year, combined with the potential significant environmental impacts that this application paves the way for, it is wholly inappropriate that a decision on this application be made by unelected planning officers. It must be heard by the full Planning Committee.

In addition to the climate emergency we would also like to raise the following points for the Council to consider when making their decision:

- Egdon Resources have breached Policy HY1 (g) in the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Mineral Strategy 2014. This states that wellsites should be restored at the earliest practicable opportunity if oil and gas extraction is found not to be economically viable. Given that the site was effectively mothballed in 2014 due to the high water content of the oil extracted, restoration of the site should already have commenced. As paragraph 59 of the NPPF<sup>3</sup> states *"Effective enforcement is important to maintain public confidence in the planning system"* so we would question why action has not been taken by the Council to enforce this planning condition.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wealdactiongroup.org.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/20/world/unga-climate-summit-guterres/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-decision-making>

- The Planning Statement states that there is a “*national need to maximise indigenous supplies of UK oil and gas*” (page 26). This is misleading. It is a well-known fact that around of 80%<sup>4</sup> of UK produced oil is exported.
- The Planning Statement refers to various national government policies in support of its application (see Material Considerations, page 17). However, there is no specific mention of the strategic importance or need for further onshore oil exploration and production in current UK Government national energy policy. Regarding fossil fuels current policy is predominantly focused on the further development of North Sea gas reserves. For example:
  - 2020 Energy White Paper, Powering our Net Zero Future: This paper addresses oil and gas in chapter 6 and 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 2021 Jeremy Hunt MP was asked by a constituent 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 on to us from The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP then Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change at the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy dated 21 May referred to:
    - the written Ministerial Statement on Energy Policy from 24 March 2021<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup> and policy paper<sup>7</sup> relating to the North Sea transition deal.

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.

- April 2022 British Energy Security Strategy<sup>8</sup>: Regarding fossil fuels this largely focuses on the further development of North Sea gas reserves. Gas is mentioned as a “transition” [to net zero] fuel with no mention of oil in this context. With regards to onshore fossil fuels specifically it mentions that it is “*open-minded*” but this is clearly in the context of shale gas reserves and the commissioning of the BGS to look at issues around seismicity.
- March 2023 Powering Up Britain, Energy Security Plan<sup>9</sup>: Whilst this report states that “*we remain absolutely committed to maximising the vital production of UK oil and gas as the North Sea basin declines*” it is clear that the overriding focus regarding fossil fuels is on the perceived need to secure up secure gas supplies. There is very little mention of oil. For example, oil is mentioned 10 times and largely only in passing, whilst gas is mentioned 159 times. There is no specific mention of onshore oil and gas.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://upliftuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Uplift-brief\\_Energy-Security-and-North-Sea-Oil-and-Gas.pdf](https://upliftuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Uplift-brief_Energy-Security-and-North-Sea-Oil-and-Gas.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-03-24/hcws879>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/north-sea-deal-to-protect-jobs-in-green-energy-transition>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/north-sea-transition-deal>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy>

<sup>9</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1148252/powering-up-britain-energy-security-plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1148252/powering-up-britain-energy-security-plan.pdf)