

Bournemouth, Poole Bay, Isle of Wight & Purbeck Stakeholders
C/O Stuart Lane
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Bournemouth
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18th February 2018

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
& The Environmental Management Team
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning
AB1 Building
Crimon Place
Aberdeen,
AB10 1BJ

Dear Mr Clark,

Reference W/4207/2017

We would like to raise our deep concerns about an application to drill offshore just 4.4 miles from Bournemouth beach.

Our main concern is the devastating implications should there be a serious accident. The consequences of a major oil spill at this location pose an existential threat to the local economy and natural environment. As you may be aware, Bournemouth, Poole and the wider coastal area is heavily reliant on tourism and in turn the natural beauty and rich natural resources of this idyllic coastal region. The Bournemouth and Poole tourism strategy 2017-2022 report quantifies the benefits to be approximately “10 million visitors a year spending over £¾ billion and supporting over 12,000 jobs”.

The region is no stranger to oil and gas exploration. Wytch farm resides in Poole Bay and is the largest onshore oil field in Western Europe. The site pioneered extended reach drilling precisely to avoid the additional risks offshore drilling would pose to the area. Whilst in an ideal world, the area would not have to support any risk from the oil and gas industry, offshore drilling this close to the coast, would be to take an unnecessary and reckless gamble.

Corallian’s Environmental Assessment describes the risks of a worse case ‘blow-out’ scenario as low, the consequences however are inescapably high and permitting this application would set a precedent for future applications. Multiple drillings would multiply up the level of risk.

We do not need to theorise what could happen, we can see real world examples of very similar offshore projects that were struck by the one thing that can never be completely eradicated - human error. In 2009 an offshore rig in Montara Australia experienced a blow-out. The oil spill covered over 2000 square miles. Unlike onshore wells which can be capped very quickly, offshore, a relief well must be drilled to stem the flow. This takes many weeks by which time the volume of oil released could be tens of millions of litres. This would be comparable to the Torrey Canyon oil spill of 1967, but just over 4 miles from Bournemouth, Poole and Swanage Beaches.

We feel the protection required here should go beyond the approach that has recently been drawn up for the fracking industry and the new financial tests being applied to Third Energy. Offshore spills, as we can observe from the Deepwater Horizon spill, lead to scenarios that are irrecoverable, even when a company like BP can commit tens of billions of pounds to attempt recovery. When fishing grounds are damaged, tourist destinations tainted, businesses and livelihoods lost and ecosystems destroyed, if BP can't rectify this kind of situation, what hope would a pop-up company like Corallian have?

UKOG has recently announced that high environmental sensitivity was a key factor in the recent decision not to drill offshore near the Isle of Wight (1). Sensitive marine systems such as those supporting the UK's most important sea horse colony, as reported in the Telegraph (2).

The acknowledgment that the risks outweigh the benefits when it comes to offshore drilling in sensitive areas has maintained a long-term ban on drilling in Alaska and notably, a recently introduced ban from drilling in the State of Florida. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has decided "Florida is unique and its coastal waters are heavily reliant on tourism as an economic driver..... I am removing Florida from consideration for new oil and gas platforms" (3).

We would like to advocate a similar strategy to that introduced in Florida for Bournemouth and Poole Bay from Swanage and Studland to the Isle of Wight.

Please take these points into consideration when dealing with the Corallian and similar applications and issue a statement so that residents and visitors can be sure their coastal environment will be protected. This will also help re-assure local business and future investors that Bournemouth, Poole, The Isle of Wight and Purbeck are safe to invest in and will never be under any threat from offshore drilling.

We look forward to your support on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Lane – Bournemouth, Poole Bay, Isle of Wight & Purbeck Stakeholders

Co signatories -The listed organisations have read and agreed to co-sign this letter.

Dr Jane Goodall DBE – Founder Jane Goodall Institute and UN Messenger of Peace

Chris Packham - Television and radio presenter, author and photographer

Miranda Krestovnikoff – Television and radio presenter, president of the RSPB

Kate Humble - Television presenter and narrator, ex-president of the RSPB

Ellie Harrison – Television presenter and journalist

Molly Scott Cato MEP - South West and Gibraltar

Clare Moody MEP - South West and Gibraltar

Sir Christopher Chope OBE MP - Christchurch

Cllr Simon Bull – Bournemouth Borough Council

Cllr Clare Sutton – Dorset County Council

Bournemouth Chamber of Trade and Commerce

Virgin Start Up

East Dorset Friends of The Earth

Bournemouth & Poole Greenpeace

The Seahorse Trust

Birds of Poole Harbour

Darwin Ecology

Bournemouth National Science Society

Fossil Free Dorset

Bournemouth 2026 Trust

The Purbeck Society

CC:

Dorset wildlife Trust, Natural England, Jurassic Coast Team, AONB, Environment Agency, English Heritage, WWF- UK, Swanage Town Council, Purbeck District Council, Dorset County Council, National Trust, Dorset Local Nature Partnership, Townsend Nature Reserve, Dorset Coast Forum, Purbeck Heritage Forum, East Devon and Dorset National Park, Swanage Coast Forum, Purbeck Association of National Trust, Friends of Durlston, Tobias Ellwood MP, Richard Drax MP, Conor Burns MP, Michael Tomlinson MP, Robert Syms MP, Councillor Robert Gould - Leader Dorset County Council, John Beesley – Leader of Bournemouth Borough Council, Janet Walton – Leader of Poole Borough Council, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, Mechtild Rössler, Director for Heritage - UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris, Mizuki Murai – World Heritage Monitoring Officer – IUCN World HQ, Switzerland, Tracey Crouch MP, World Heritage site Minister, DCMS

- (1) <https://drillordrop.com/2018/01/31/ukog-confirms-surrender-of-isle-of-wight-exploration-licence-six-weeks-after-it-happened/>
- (2) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/02/07/britains-endangered-seahorse-colony-threat-bid-drill-oil/>
- (3) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/09/climate/trump-florida-offshore-drilling.html>



