

[Press release: Environmental permits issued for Holmwood drilling site](#)

The Environment Agency has issued environmental permits to the company to provide a high level of protection to the environment during its operations at the Holmwood site in Dorking, Surrey.

Before issuing the permits the Environment Agency carried out a detailed assessment of the application and considered all legal requirements, along with all comments received through two rounds of public consultation. The environmental permits issued set out the stringent conditions the site operator must comply with to ensure that the environment and local people are protected.

Europa Oil & Gas Limited will need to have all relevant permissions in place from other regulatory partners before it can start operations on site.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

We would like to thank everyone who responded to the public consultations. We have carefully considered all of the information received and are confident, in issuing these permits, that we have the right controls in place to ensure operations are carried out safely.

The Environment Agency plays a key role in protecting the environment. We take an evidence based approach to regulation and had to be satisfied that the necessary protections were in place before we would allow exploration to begin. We are confident that the legally binding conditions in the permits and our compliance checks will ensure that operations meet the highest standards.

We do understand the concerns that a large number of people have raised and we are committed to keeping local people informed of our work to regulate the site.

[View the oil and gas mining waste permit issued for Holmwood Wellsite, Surrey.](#)

Notes to editors

The permits authorise Europa Oil & Gas Limited to:

- drill a new oil well at Holmwood
- store oil on-site
- manage any radioactive waste arising from these activities (a separate permit has been issued in this respect)

There is further information on how the Environment Agency determines applications, the time scales involved and how it regulates onshore oil and gas:

And information on radioactive waste permits:

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- [Environmental permitting: public participation statement](#)
- [Onshore oil and gas exploration and extraction: environmental permits](#)
- [Onshore oil and gas regulation – information page](#)

And information on radioactive waste permits:

- [Radioactive substances for non-nuclear sites](#)

[Press release: Business leaders hail M49 junction construction as boost to economy](#)

A new junction Highways England is creating on the M49 will improve road access and provide a much-needed connection into the Avonmouth and Severnside Enterprise Area from the motorway network.

The junction, which comprises two bridges, will also promote economic growth in this area of Bristol, and reduce the numbers of HGVs and other vehicles on the local road network.

At a groundbreaking ceremony, key regional business leaders joined Highways England, the company responsible for the country's motorways and major A roads, and local authorities to welcome the £49 million scheme, which calculations are forecasted to help create 14,000 jobs in the area.

Nick Aldworth, Highways England's South West Regional Delivery Director said:

We're delighted to be breaking ground on this strategically and economically important scheme for the South West and Bristol area.

Every £1 invested in this scheme will bring more than £30 into the local economy, generating more than 14,000 jobs in the long term.

(Left to right) Colin Bird, Highways England Programme Leader, Peter Mumford, Highways England Executive Director and Jack Lopresti MP.

Highways England is working with partners, including South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, on the scheme which involves using the existing bridge at Farm Lane with a second bridge being built immediately next to it.

Located to the south of the Western Approach Distribution Park and west of the village of Easter Compton, the two bridges will be incorporated into a single roundabout spanning the motorway with new access and exit slip roads connecting fully with both northbound and southbound traffic.

The scheme has also been welcomed by joint venture partners Robert Hitchins Ltd and Harrow Estates plc, who own the neighbouring 300-acre Westgate employment site.

Simon Tothill, Property and Development Director for Robert Hitchins, said:

We have worked closely with Highways England for the last three years to enable the opening up of this area and are delighted to see progress being made.

This project is all about the creation of jobs and economic growth. We have absolutely no doubt that it will be a huge boost to the region, deliver significant new investment into the area and unlock the large and incredibly well-located Westgate site, which already benefits from planning permission for employment uses.

SevernNet, who represent business and residents in the Severnside area, added:

SevernNet is delighted with Highways England's commitment to construct the M49 intermediate junction for Severnside – a direct link to the strategic road network will support those businesses already established and facilitate further growth within the Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area, and also relieve congestion in and around Avonmouth.

At the ceremony, Jack Lopresti, MP for Filton and Bradley Stoke, was joined by Peter Mumford, Highways England Executive Director of Major Projects, and Highways England Regional Investment Programme Director David Haimes, together with construction partners Galliford Try, South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and West of England LEP representatives.

The new M49 junction project is the first Road Investment Strategy scheme to start construction in the South West, one of six multi-million pound road schemes aimed at boosting the economy, tourism and heritage in the region.

Another key milestone in the South West within the next six months includes next steps in the planning process for the A303 Stonehenge tunnel and dualling scheme and the A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross dualling scheme in Cornwall.

The upgrades are funded by the Government's biggest-in-a-generation £15 billion investment in motorways and main A roads, and delivered by Highways England.

Construction of the new M49 junction is due to be completed by December 2019 and local communities and business will be kept informed on progress by the Highways England project team and construction partners Galliford Try.

Duncan Elliott, Managing Director of Galliford Try's Highways business, said:

We're delighted to get cracking on a much-needed scheme that will bring far-reaching benefits. We have considerable experience of motorway work from our participation in the Smart motorways programme and will bring this to bear on the Avonmouth junction scheme. We will keep any disruption to a minimum and keep road users updated about progress.

For more information visit the [M49 Avonmouth scheme web page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Social prescribing schemes across England to receive £4.5 million](#)

The government will invest nearly £4.5 million in programmes to refer patients to local voluntary and community services such as walking clubs, gardening or arts activities.

The practice, known as 'social prescribing', aims to improve patients' quality of life, health and wellbeing by recognising that health is affected by a range of social, economic and environmental factors.

Evidence shows that this approach can reduce demand on NHS services: a UK study found that after 3 to 4 months, 80% of patients referred to a social prescribing scheme had reduced their use of A&E, outpatient appointments and inpatient admissions.

A total of 23 social prescribing projects in England will receive a share of the funding to extend existing social prescribing schemes or establish new ones.

The schemes include a focus on:

- reaching out to people who may be socially isolated, for example because of mental health problems or learning difficulties
- providing support for those impacted by health inequalities, such as transgender people or people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds
- helping people with particularly complex needs who regularly access health services

Examples of the schemes receiving funding include:

- a new street games scheme across Sheffield, Southampton, Luton, and Brighton and Hove, focusing on socially excluded young people aged 5 to 25
- a Dudley Council project to expand support for people with a very high dependency on A&E
- a new Citizens Advice North Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire scheme to support those who are lonely or socially isolated in deprived rural areas

The funding will come from the Health and Wellbeing Fund, part of a programme of government investment in the voluntary sector. The projects will be fully funded through the scheme in their first year. Additional joint funding from local commissioners will be agreed for the subsequent 2 years.

Care Minister Caroline Dinenage said:

The voluntary and community sector has such a vital role to play in working with our health system to provide the kind of support that you can't receive at your local GP surgery or hospital.

This new funding will mean that many more people receive support that looks at their needs holistically, enabling them to live happier, more independent lives. I look forward to seeing these projects put their plans into action and provide support to hundreds of thousands more people.

Press release: National treasure on the move: Stephenson's Rocket to remain on long-term display in the North

- Rocket currently on display in Newcastle-Gateshead for first time in 150 years
- Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright welcomes Science Museum's plans to increase access to key part of Britain's railway history

Stephenson's Rocket, one of Britain's most iconic feats of engineering and part of the Science Museum Group's collection, will go on long-term display in the North of England.

Rocket, designed by Robert Stephenson, was built in Newcastle in 1829 and it returned to the city for the first time in 150 years for this summer's Great Exhibition of the North.

The move to keep the engine in the North has been welcomed by Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright as part of the Government and national museums' ongoing commitment to increase access to culture around the country.

Rocket was the clear winner in the locomotive trials held at Rainhill in 1829 to decide the best design to power the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. And it is to Manchester that the engine will travel next, going on display at the Museum of Science and Industry in September.

It will then return to the Science Museum for a short period to be prepared for a long-term move to the National Railway Museum in York. There it will take its place among other global icons such as Mallard and the Bullet Train as part of the museum's ambitious plans to tell the story of the past, present and future of innovation on the railways.

It comes as The Prime Minister held a regional Cabinet in Newcastle-Gateshead today to mark The Great Exhibition of the North, a 80-day showpiece of the best art, design and innovation from across the region.

The Culture Secretary then joined Ian Blatchford, Science Museum Group director, at The Discovery Museum which is exhibiting Stephenson's Rocket during the Exhibition. Its arrival has helped increase visitors to the museum by more than 100% compared the same period last year.

Jeremy Wright, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said: "Stephenson's Rocket is an iconic part of Britain's proud railway history and it is fantastic news that it will remain on long-term display in the North.

"It is right that our great art and culture reaches all parts of the country.

This bold move by The Science Museum Group will ensure more people can see this national treasure and is an inspiring example of what can be done to make culture available to the widest possible audience.”

Ian Blatchford, Director of the Science Museum Group, said: “The Science Museum Group is a truly national organisation, and enthusiastic about bringing the world’s greatest science and technology collection to everyone. I warmly endorse the Secretary of State’s commitment to strengthening fair and excellent cultural provision across the UK. A country with such an amazing history of innovation deserves it.”

DCMS press office on 020 7211 2210