Press release: Multi-million upgrade for A1 in Northumberland

Following a six-week consultation last year, 3 options were presented to residents and local stakeholders for plans to widen the A1 between Morpeth and Felton, and 1 option to widen the A1 between Alnwick and Ellingham.

Highways England is planning to upgrade the sections of single carriageway in Northumberland, creating a dual carriageway on the entire stretch of the route between Newcastle and Ellingham.

These improvements will provide additional capacity, and improve journey times and safety while supporting economic growth in the region.

A total of 587 responses were received and the majority of people (41%) preferred the green option for the Morpeth to Felton section and nearly half of respondents agreed with the orange option for the Alnwick to Ellingham section (49%). Today these options were unveiled as the ones Highways England is taking forward in its preferred route announcement (PRA) for the improvements.

Highways England project manager Nanette Hoyle said:

> We recognise the importance of this route and are delighted to announce the 2 options we are taking forward are the ones which the majority of people wanted in last year's consultation.
>
> Over the last few months we have worked hard to identify the best possible options by working through the feedback from the events, along with safety, economic and environmental analysis and we are excited to share our plans with local stakeholders, businesses and the community.
>
> Work now continues, adding detail to the design for each of the dualling options and on planning how we will deliver them in a way that keeps traffic moving.
>
> I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for taking part. There will be further opportunities to have your say as the schemes develop.

The green option between Morpeth and Felton includes building a new carriageway to the west of the existing road between Priest's Bridge and Burgham Park. This option will improve safety along the route and will also have benefits during construction in terms of worker safety and efficiency. The existing A1 will act as a local road once the scheme has been completed.

The orange route between Alnwick and Ellingham involves upgrading the

existing road to dual carriageway, widening either the east or west of the current road depending on the local features that need to be considered. This option also includes improvements at the South Charlton junction.

Further work to refine the ideas will now take place and a further consultation with more design details included will take place next year. Construction work on the £290 million scheme could start 2019/2020.

You can view the preferred route announcment and all other reports on the consultation page.

Money for widening the A1 is being provided as part of the Government's £15 billion Road Investment Strategy (RIS), and will help boost the Northern Powerhouse agenda of improving transport connectivity and reliability to help the economy of the North.

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.

Speech: Exchequer Secretary's speech at the Offshore Europe Conference

It's great to join you all in the Granite city for my first Offshore Europe conference – and many thanks to SPE for inviting me along here today.

Our thoughts are inevitably with the people of Houston, Aberdeen's sister city at this time.

The links between the two cities and their people have been forged through this industry.

So I know I speak for everyone here in wishing them strength in the days and weeks ahead.

For now, let's return to the focus of this conference, which is to look to the future of this industry.

And what I want to do is contribute to those discussions and shed some light on the government's perspective on an industry of such importance to the UK's

economy.

Challenges

Our starting point, then, is one of real optimism.

Undoubtedly, this has been a challenging time for the industry – we all recognise that.

And that's not just been our experience here in the UK – though we of course have our own challenges with such a mature basin.

But these have been challenging times the world over for the oil and gas industry, its workers and their families.

Here in the UK though, we've responded strongly.

The government has taken unprecedented measures to back the UK's industry – with over £2 billion of support in the last couple of years – boosted further by an already competitive tax and business environment.

We've also been pleased to see the industry itself responding so effectively to difficult conditions.

The progress you've achieved in terms of improving efficiency and competitiveness has been impressive as we've seen operating costs come tumbling down in this time.

Over the last couple of years, the average cost for a barrel has almost halved – from around $30 to $15.

Those are productivity gains I'd like to see all our industries making in Britain!

Confidence

What we've seen more recently, therefore, has been encouraging signs of growing confidence.

We started the year with asset and corporate deals worth almost $4 billion.

And high profile deals investing in the UK Continental Shelf have continued to be announced since then.

But as confidence returns, there is still no room for complacency – in industry, or indeed in government.

Commitment

That's why I've come here today to confirm – once again – our commitment to this sector.

The principles we set out for the UK's oil and gas fiscal regime – in our

paper Driving Investment – they are principles that remain firmly in place.

Because we fully understand the importance of certainty and predictability in the taxes you pay. You can expect a competitive and stable environment in which to plan your investments.

And, as we promised in the Spring Budget, we are investigating whether we can make our tax system better to encourage investment in our older oil and gas assets. I am talking about transferable tax history here.

We will be reporting back in a few months' time at the Autumn Budget.

But it is worth pausing on the age of our basin in the UK, because that clearly brings challenges, as well as opportunities.

There is, of course, still a lot of life left in the UK Continental Shelf.

With up to 20 billion barrels still to be recovered, we still need to get new investment coming in.

Decommissioning

But we must also recognise that the UK is a mature basin, and decommissioning will feature much more heavily in its future.

We've already seen around 10% of North Sea facilities decommissioned.

Over the next decade we're set to see another 100 offshore platforms fully or partially removed, and 1,800 wells plugged.

And such a clean up mission will come at some cost.

Earlier this year, the Oil and Gas Authority produced a new estimate of how much it might be in total – around £60 billion between now and the 2050s.

Bringing the Costs Down

That amount won't all need to be found by the industry – we estimate about £24 billion will be met by the Exchequer through 'decommissioning tax relief'.

So we have a shared goal in making sure those costs fall further!

The Oil and Gas Authority has set an ambitious target to bring the total cost down to less than £39 billion.

That will call for big changes to the way we do things – with better skills and more innovation and technological advances.

But we've already seen what the industry can do in making big efficiency gains.

And we're also seeing our top academic and training centres rallying to meet this challenge.

Over the last half a century, they've been instrumental in training generation after generation of skilled experts for the industry, and working hand in hand with the sector to research tomorrow's technologies.

Now we're seeing them lead the way in decommissioning – with Aberdeen's new Oil and Gas Technology Centre teaming up with Aberdeen University and Robert Gordon University to set up a dedicated Decommissioning Solution Centre.

This multimillion pound venture will bring together academic researchers with industry and business experts to build new expertise, research new technologies and support a world-class supply chain that can help meet the global demand for decommissioning.

Window of opportunity

This joint effort between industry and academia is so important.

Right now we have a huge window of opportunity to become pioneers in decommissioning.

We were the first to try new technologies and methods to overcome the inhospitable waters of the North Sea, so many decades ago.

Now, as the North Sea becomes the first major production basin in the world to reach maturity and start large scale decommissioning, we have the chance to once again make ourselves the go-to global experts.

That means thousands of highly-skilled job opportunities, it means export opportunities, and it means British businesses taking their place in a worldwide, world-class supply chain.

The North Sea decommissioning industry is already worth £2 billion a year – I hope we'll start to see that grow rapidly and I know that ideas about how we do that and make our mark on the global stage will be a big part of this conference.

Conclusion

So thank you all for listening – and if there are two things I hope you take away from what I've said today, it's first that the government remains fully committed in its support of the UK's oil and gas industry.

But second, that we're excited about the opportunities for its future.

I wish you all a good conference.

News story: £8,989.70 fine imposed for fisheries offences

On 29 August 2017 the Plymouth Magistrates' Court sentenced Mr Robert Manning a self-employed fish merchant in a prosecution brought by the MMO.

The court heard how Mr Manning, a registered buyer of first sale fish had failed to submit sales notes to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) within the 48 hour period required by EU Regulations.

Investigations by MMO Officers revealed a total of 270 sales notes, detailing purchases that Mr Manning had made between 1 January 2014 and 30 June 2016 from four vessels were not provided to the MMO. The transactions amounted to a total of 57,562kg, of scallops valued at £127,934.60.

Mr Manning entered a guilty plea to the charge and after hearing mitigation on his behalf the court ordered him to pay a fine of £1,882, the costs of bringing the prosecution of £6,937.70 and a victim surcharge of £170.
A spokesman for the MMO said:

"The requirement to submit sales notes within 48 hours enables the MMO to gain an accurate picture of fish stocks on which to base its fisheries management decisions. When (as in this case) sales notes are not submitted that picture becomes partial, distorted or inaccurate. This prosecution shows that the MMO will take the appropriate enforcement action to prevent such a situation occurring."

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Press release: New members of the Council for Science and Technology confirmed

The Council for Science and Technology advises the Prime Minister on strategic science and technology policy issues that cut across the responsibilities of individual government departments.

Sir Mark Walport, Government Chief Scientific Adviser said:

> The 5 new members of the Council for Science and Technology bring with them a breadth of experience and expertise which will enable the Council to continue to provide excellent advice to government on science and technology opportunities and challenges. This will help ensure the UK remains at the forefront of global science.

New members

The new members are:

Professor Sir David Cannadine (ex-officio member)

David is President of the British Academy. He is an historian of modern British history from 1800 to 2000. He has published extensively on aspects of social, cultural, political and imperial history from this period. He has focused on the British aristocracy, urban development and the structure of power in British towns, issues of class in Britain and the themes of cultural expression and ceremony. He is Dodge Professor of History at Princeton University and became President of the British Academy in July 2017.

Suranga Chandratillake

Suranga is General Partner at Balderton Capital and helps to lead early-stage investments in the online media and technology sectors. He was previously an entrepreneur and engineer, and co-founded the intelligent search engine blinkx. Suranga has served as a Software Developer at Morgan Stanley, creating global risk resolution systems. He has an MA in Computer Science from the University of Cambridge and holds patents in the area of video discovery and online video advertising. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering in 2012.

Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser

Ottoline is a professor of plant development at the University of Cambridge and Director of the Sainsbury Laboratory, Cambridge. She received her BA (1986) and PhD (1990) in genetics from the University of Cambridge. Among her honours are the Society of Experimental Biology's President's Medal (2000), the Royal Society Rosalind Franklin Award (2007), the International Plant Growth Substance Association's Silver Medal (2010) and the UK Genetics Society Medal (2016). She was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in the 2017 New Year Honours list. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Fellow of Clare College Cambridge, a Foreign Associate of the US National Academy of Sciences, a Member of the European Molecular Biology Organisation, and the Leopoldina. She is Chair of the British Society for Developmental Biology and the Royal Society's Science Policy Advisory Group. She is Co-Editor in Chief of Current Opinions in Plant Biology and an Editor of Development.

Professor Max Lu

Max is a Chinese-Australian chemical engineer and nanotechnologist. He has been President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey since April 2016. Previously he was Provost and Senior Vice-President at the University of Queensland. He was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to: education and international research in the field of materials chemistry and nanotechnology, engineering, and Australia-China relations. He has been appointed to the Boards of the National Physical Laboratory and Universities UK. He is a member of the Leadership Council of the National Centre for Universities and Business and a Deputy Lieutenant of Surrey.

Professor Joyce Tait

Joyce is Professor and Director at the Innogen Institute, University of Edinburgh. She has an interdisciplinary background, covering both natural and social sciences. She has specialised in innovation-governance-stakeholder interactions in the life sciences and related areas, including cell therapies and regenerative medicine, synthetic biology, genetic modification (GM) technologies, drug development, stratified medicine and biofuels. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Additionally, Lord Stern's membership has been extended beyond the end of his

ex-officio term as President of the British Academy.

The Council for Science and Technology works on cross-cutting issues of strategic importance, taking a medium to longer-term approach. In developing its advice, it takes into account the cultural, economic, environmental, ethical and social context of developments in STEM.

Notes to editors

1) Find out more about the work of the council.

2) The appointments were made in accordance with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of practice for ministerial appointments to public bodies.

3) Members of the Council for Science and Technology are:

- Professor Sir Mark Walport, FRS, FMedSci – Government Chief Scientific Adviser (Co-chair of CST)
- Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell, FRS, FMedSci – President and Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University
- Professor Philip Bond, BSc, DEA, FIMA, FInstP – visiting fellow at the Oxford Centre for Industrial and Applied Mathematics and visiting professor at the University of Bristol
- Professor Sir Keith Burnett, CBE, FRS – Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University
- Professor Dame Ann Dowling, DBE, FREng, FRS – President of the Royal Academy of Engineering (ex-officio member)
- Anne Glover, CBE – Chief Executive of Amadeus Capital Partners Ltd
- Dr Paul Golby, CBE, FREng – Chair of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and Chair of NATS
- Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow, FMedSci – ex-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kent
- John Kingman – Chair of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) (ex-officio member)
- Professor Sir Robert Lechler, FMedSci – President of the Academy of Medical Sciences (ex-officio member)
- Dr Michael Lynch, OBE, FREng – Founder of Invoke Capital
- Dervilla Mitchell, CBE, FIEI, FREng – Director of Arup
- Professor Fiona Murray, CBE – Professor of Entrepreneurship at MIT Sloan School of Management
- Professor Sir Venki Ramakrishnan, FRS – President of the Royal Society (ex-officio member)
- Colin Smith, CBE, FREng – ex-Director of Engineering and Technology at Rolls-Royce
- Lord Stern of Brentford – Chair of the Grantham Research Institute at the London School of Economics

4) CST reports directly to the Prime Minister. Its terms of reference are to advise the Prime Minister and government on the implications of science and research, engineering and technology. CST works across the remits of individual departments. Areas of advice include:

- the opportunities and risks that science, technology and disruptive innovation present; using horizon scanning to highlight issues about:
- research and science capability
- innovation and the economy
- health and quality of life within the UK
- sustainable development and resilience
- how science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM) can be developed and sustained in the UK; this can be through education and skills, and the promotion of international co-operation
- what the government’s high-level priorities for science and technology should be