

Press release: Environment Agency minded to approve application at Horse Hill

The Environment Agency is minded to approve application for an environmental permit at Horse Hill oil and gas exploratory site in Surrey.

The application is for a bespoke environmental permit to drill a new well, drill a side track to the existing well and to carry out flow testing. Horse Hill Developments Limited have also applied for a Standard Rules Permit to store oil on site. In deciding whether or not to issue the permits, the Environment Agency will take into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements.

Before the Environment Agency grants the bespoke environmental permit there will be a further consultation period, which closes on 4 August 2017, to allow people to comment on the application.

[Further information on the bespoke application, a copy of our draft decision document and details of how to comment.](#)

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

An environmental permit sets out stringent conditions that a site must adhere to. We will not issue an environmental permit for a site if we consider that activities taking place will cause significant pollution to the environment or harm to human health.

Although we are minded to approve the application for the bespoke permit we are still in the determination process and a final decision has not yet been made. We want to hear from the public and understand peoples' views on the application. Everybody has the chance to see what the bespoke permit may look like and to raise any additional concerns before we make any final decision.

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- [How you can participate in decisions on applications for environmental permits](#)
- [Information on the environmental permits and permissions you need for onshore oil and gas operations in England](#)

Press release: Francesca Osowska to leave Scotland Office

The Scotland Office has announced that Director Francesca Osowska will be leaving the department later this year.

Francesca, who joined the Scotland Office in January 2015, has played an

instrumental role in overseeing the implementation of the Scotland Act 2016, following the recommendations of the Smith Commission.

She will begin her new role as Chief Executive of Scottish Natural Heritage in October 2017.

Responding to the announcement, Secretary of State David Mundell said:

Since January 2015 Francesca has been a dedicated and enthusiastic voice for Scotland as Director for the Scotland Office. From ensuring the powers recommended by the Smith Commission were delivered in full, to engaging fully with Scottish businesses as we prepare for our exit from the EU, her tenacity has helped me ensure Scotland's voice has been heard at the heart of Westminster.

On behalf of the Scotland Office I thank her for all her hard work, and warmly congratulate her on her new role.

Francesca Osowska said:

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve as the Director for the Scotland Office for over two and a half years, ensuring that Scotland's voice is heard in Whitehall and Whitehall's voice in Scotland.

From overseeing the implementation of the Scotland Act 2016, to witnessing the UK Government's implementation of transformative City Deals, it has been a truly rewarding experience. I would like to thank all my colleagues and wish the Scotland Office and its Ministers continued success in the future.

A competition to appoint my successor will start shortly to ensure a smooth transition before I take up my post with Scottish Natural Heritage on 2 October.

[Press release: Journey planning advice for weekend of 'royal' events](#)

Wednesday next week (19 July) kicks off a five-day 'long weekend' of events starting with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Flower Show at Tatton Park near Knutsford in Cheshire, closely followed on the Thursday (20) by the competition stage of the Open Golf tournament at Royal Birkdale near Southport in Merseyside.

The motorway network around Cheshire and Merseyside, as well as parts of Lancashire, is likely to be particularly busy at key times around the weekend.

Chris Chadwick, Highways England's events planning manager for the North West, said:

Next week promises to be a very busy one in parts of the region. Our traffic officers will be working around the clock as usual to help keep drivers on the move – including responding to incidents and setting signs warning drivers of any congestion, incidents or diversion advice.

All drivers, whether or not they are heading to the golf or horticultural show, can help themselves by planning their routes and checking for traffic and congestion before setting out on journeys.

Practice sessions at Royal Birkdale will begin on Sunday (July 16), 4 days before the start of the tournament proper. Between 30,000 and 40,000 people a day are expected to attend the tournament with up to 80,000 visitors over the 5 days of the ever popular RHS Show.

Highways England will be using signs to give journey advice for the events and its traffic officers will be on the look-out for any incidents or congestion on the motorway network.

The Royal Horticultural Society's website features full information about the show including public transport options and advice for drivers with a [dedicated journey planning page](#). The show is open between 10am and 6.30pm each day except on the Sunday when it closes at 5pm.

More information about [journey planning for the golf tournament](#).

Highways England provides live traffic information [via its website](#), local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile apps. Local Twitter services are also available at @highwaysNWEST.

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.

[Press release: Gateway under motorway](#)

Dog walkers, cyclists and fishing enthusiasts will be able to get to a canal towpath after a new gateway was installed under the M5 Oldbury viaduct in the West Midlands.

The gate, funded by Highways England, can be used as an entry and exit point on to the nearby Birmingham Canal towpath and Spon Lane in West Bromwich.

A previous route was closed so Highways England stepped in to install the gate so people could get to the towpath again.

Highways England emergency planning officer, Frank Bird, said:

This means people will now be able to walk their dogs along the canal towpath.

Highways England is also committed to try and improve cycle access to routes that were previously not available, and this gate will allow cyclists to join and leave the towpath from Spon Lane.

The nearby area has also benefited from a litter pick and tidy-up.

Peter Mathews CMG, chair of the Canal & River Trust's West Midlands Waterway Partnership, said:

This is great news, the canal is an important and much-loved green space for local people to escape to so it's fantastic to see these access improvements made.

We're also very grateful for the recent clean-up. As a charity support like this is invaluable and we're always very keen to work with anyone that wants to help us make local canals even more special for people and wildlife.

The viaduct, between junctions 1 and 2, is currently in the process of undergoing essential repair and waterproofing work.

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