

14 February 2023

PRESS RELEASE: Drilling threat returns to Balcombe

Residents face another three years of disruption as Planning Inspectorate overturns WSCC decision on oil reserve testing.

Residents in Balcombe face another three years of disruption as the threat of drilling for shale oil beneath the High Weald AONB returned this week.

An appeal decision by the Government's Planning Inspectorate published yesterday (February 13) overturned West Sussex County Council's refusal of permission for Angus Energy to do more testing.

Angus, and before it Cuadrilla, have been exploring the possibility of commercial exploitation of shale oil at the Balcombe site for well over a decade now.

This week's decision means they can test for a further three years.

"This is a bitterly disappointing decision for residents who face another three years of disruption, disturbance and uncertainty," said CPRE director Brian Kilkelly.

"CPRE Sussex opposes all oil exploration in Sussex, it has no public benefit and can only lead to environmental harm in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty."

In making his decision, the Planning Inspector failed to give weight to national climate change policy.

Instead, he emphasised national energy policy.

"This decision to allow yet more oil exploration in Balcombe is a slap in the face for our national efforts to switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy and, as with the Cumbrian coal mine decision, demonstrates that the planning system is failing its vital role to support the achievement of net zero," said CPRE volunteer Michael Brown.

"It is also a slap in the face for the people of Balcombe who, after well over a decade of being threatened with being turned into an oil-town, now face that uncertainty for another three years or more."

CPRE Sussex is urging all residents to contact their MP, condemn the planning inspector's decision and emphasise the climate emergency.

Find out more about the charity's work to oppose oil exploration at www.cpresussex.org.uk/what-we-care-about/fracking

The full appeal decision can be downloaded from the Planning Inspectorate website [here](#).

-ENDS-

For press inquiries and interview opportunities contact sheena.journalism@gmail.com.

Notes for editors:

About CPRE Sussex

CPRE Sussex is shaping a greener future for Sussex. Our priorities are:

- Beautiful landscapes, rich in nature and greener towns and cities
- Countryside and green spaces which are accessible to all, enriching lives and health
- Sustainable development for thriving communities
- Effective responses to the climate emergency

We engage with decision makers, influencing them and challenging them to protect the Sussex countryside and green spaces. We inform on environmental issues and empower individuals and communities with robust evidence to defend and enhance the green spaces they love. We believe in collaborating with others to ensure a greener future for our county. We research and provide advice on planning issues. Together we can shape a greener future for Sussex.