

Briefing paper - Oil and Gas

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The Oil & Gas sector is one of the world's largest sources of CO₂ emissions, dwarfing the emissions of large nations. For example BP emits, from its processes and its products, almost twice the CO₂ emitted by all the UK's citizens combined. However, companies such as BP strive hard to distract citizens from these facts through PR initiatives, such as announcing that they are reducing their emissions in their industrial processes - a bit like a cigarette company proudly declaring that the staff have been banned from smoking in their offices and factories. These efforts ironically reveal how concerned parts of the companies are about the challenge posed by climate change - BP for example has 97% of its earnings in oil & gas production, and that makes it extremely hard, if not impossible, to go 'Beyond Petroleum'.

Fundamentally, many in the industry recognise that they need to move out of hydrocarbon production and effectively cease to operate, but they wish to go 'Beyond' on their own timescale - which doesn't threaten profitability - whereas we believe that the science of climate change does not give us time to wait this long. The struggle is about 'time', it is not about 'if', it is about 'when' - campaigners need to take control of the 'beyond' in 'Beyond Petroleum'.

The Oil & Gas sector is an extremely strong political force, intermeshed with government, the finance sector, advertising, law, media, culture and education. This makes it a challenging industry to campaign on, but there is a wealth of campaigning 'hooks'. An important part of the strategy of forcing the industry to go 'beyond' is to recognise this complex web of companies and institutions that work together to drive forward oil & gas production, the Carbon Web, and to tackle elements of this web rather than trying to tackle the oil companies head on. For example, campaigning to persuade the Royal Bank of Scotland to cease financing oil & gas projects - it is Europe's leading private banker for the sector. Or challenging cultural establishments, such as the National Portrait Gallery, to stop taking sponsorship from the oil sector, and thereby assisting the industry in building its 'social license' to carry on extracting hydrocarbons.

see www.carbonweb.org and www.platformlondon.org

