

Briefing Note on Oil Drilling in the South West

We need a Just Transition to a low carbon economy, not a sell-off of our future

What has happened?

On the 11th of July, just one week after onshore fracking was banned in Ireland, [Minister of Communications, “Climate Action and Environment” Denis Naughten granted consent to Providence Resources PLC](#) to commence drilling for oil in the Porcupine Basin off our south-west coast. The Licence name is Frontier Exploration Licence (FEL) 2/14.

The ship hired by Providence Resources will drill 1-2 holes a day. [They will drill for 45 to 60 days.](#) There are concerns around whether a proper Strategic Environmental Assessment was conducted and the impacts on sea-life and fishing in the area.

[Providence Resources state that they expect to find 5 billion barrels of oil.](#)

Why is this a problem?

- **#KeepItInTheGround - We Can’t Afford to Look for Any More Fossil Fuels:** International climate experts warn that [80% of the known fossil fuels have to stay in the ground](#) if we want to avoid going over the safe 2 degrees limit of global warming.
 - o If catastrophic climate change is to be avoided, existing fossil fuels must be kept in the ground.
- **Our Paris Agreement Commitments:** The burning of these barrels [would bring the Irish state far and above](#) its carbon budget under the Paris Agreement, signed by 175 countries. However, the carbon released would not be recorded under the state
- **Damage to Sea-Life and Fishing Industry:** The exploration and extraction of oil and gas has [serious consequences](#) for marine life and ecology.
 - o Nature journal has shown that one blast from oil and gas exploration [kills 64% of zooplankton - the basis of the marine ecosystem - for up to 0.7 miles.](#)
 - o Atlantic Cod, Atlantic Salmon and Bluefin Tuna in Irish seas are on the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature endangered list](#)
 - o Oil and gas exploration [is also deadly](#) for Ireland’s dolphin, whale and porpoise population – both the seismic booming that’s needed to explore the sea-bed for oil and gas and the disturbances from drilling.
- **It’s a Dead Investment:** Extraction of oil and gas from the Irish Sea is not even a profitable endeavour. Shell Oil recently left the Corrib gas field with [losses of 2 billion](#). Companies like Providence Resources risk not only the destruction of our fish stocks, tourism industry and marine life, but their own investments. The millions that it costs to set up new fossil fuel infrastructure represent [“stranded assets”](#) as oil prices are unlikely to go above \$60 a barrel and divestment movements worldwide [gain momentum](#).
- **It Delays Movement to a New, Just and Sustainable Economy:** Any investment in fossil fuel industry and infrastructure will result in what is known as “carbon lock-in”, taking us on a one-way unstoppable trip to dangerous levels of global warming.

- o There are [peer reviewed studies](#) which outline how Ireland can transition to a 100% renewable energy system without increasing the costs of energy and also creating 100,000 additional Irish job.
- o We need to [provide workers with real, sustainable long-term jobs](#) that can provide for their families and our future, not short-term profits.

Why Would We Express Concern?

- **Hypocrisy:** The permission to drill was granted on the 11th of July, just one week after onshore fracking was banned in Ireland. [Government is also on the way to divesting the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund from fossil fuels.](#)
 - o It is hypocritical of Government to be seen to be environmentally sound in one respect – but deadly in another. Such under-handed behaviour is the reason why people don't have faith in politicians.
- **Needless Destruction of Sea-life for Low Tax Take:** Providence resources is not likely to strike oil at all, and in the mean-time it will severely damage the sea-life in the area. Even if oil is found, the Irish government [can only expect around a 25% tax](#) on any profits made as Ireland has one of the lowest petroleum-extraction tariffs in the world.
- **Intergenerational Damage:** As young people in our twenties, [we have never lived on a safe planet](#). Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere now stands at 400ppm, [a level not seen by life on earth in over 15 million years](#). We are now living through the 6th mass extinction, caused by a rush for short-term profits, to the cost of the future of our planet.

What do we want?

As head of the “Department for Climate Action”, we call on Minister Naughten to retract the Providence Resources permit immediately. Furthermore, we call on the Minister to follow the [lead of France and ban all new oil and gas exploration](#) in Irish waters.

Other Facts

Providence Resources has other drilling operations planned including:

- [Drilling operations from July 2019 to July 2021 in the North Celtic Sea Basin under the Standard Exploration Licence \(SEL\) 1/11](#). This means that the third and fourth phases are also extended to [November 2021 and 2025](#) respectively.
- [Drilling off the coast of Dalkey](#) in the Kish Basin only .6km offshore, a licence has been extended for the first phase of the Licence by two years until 17(th) August 2018 and an overall extension of one year to the licence term until 17(th) August 2020 under Standard Exploration Licence (SEL) 2/11