



Don't let the North Sea story end on a cliffhanger

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Offshore Energies UK annual conference, in Aberdeen, Scotland

17 September 2024



Good morning, everyone.

My name is Doris Reiter and I lead bp's business in the North Sea.

I'm delighted to have been asked to speak today and would like to thank Dave and the OEUK team for putting on another great event for our industry - particularly at this critical time.

I also look forward to hearing from the Ministers.

For bp it couldn't be a more opportune moment to be speaking to you all on this day.

I say that for two reasons.

Firstly – because today is a monumental day for bp in the North Sea.

And secondly – it's a crucial time for our industry as we find ourselves once more at a crossroads - more on that later.

But back to my first reason and the significance of today for bp's business in the North Sea.

It was on September 17, 1964 – exactly 60 years ago – when we picked up our first licence to explore for oil and gas in the North Sea.

The then very aptly named Ministry of Power – issued licence number P 001 permitting bp to “*bore for and get petroleum from the seabed and subsoil under the sea.*”

A bit of a tongue twister for a non-native English speaker, but those were and still remain, the words in the current licensing permits.

And it would be those words that formed the first chapter of bp's North Sea book, if such a book were to exist!

I'm sure the early chapters would describe the impossible task faced by our predecessors.

In fact, in 1965 Time Magazine called the North Sea ‘the most treacherous body of water ever ventured into by an offshore rig’.

And pages would recount the pioneering spirit of those who helped build an industry from scratch and develop safety standards and processes that would eventually be exported around the world.

Other chapters of the North Sea story would be dedicated to tales of discovery – the early giants like the Forties field for example.

And pages would be filled with anecdotes of a skilled workforce, careers built, communities thriving, and a world-leading supply chain anchored right here in Aberdeen.

Now they say pictures paint a thousand words, so with that I want to pause my story and share with you this short film which captures our bp journey in the North Sea so far.

I have now watched this multiple times, and it still gives me goosebumps. I'm sure you'll agree it's a great film which I think nicely sums up 60 years in three minutes. However, perhaps sadly for you my captive audience, I've got several more minutes to go!

Earlier, I said there were two reasons it was an opportune moment to be speaking here today.

So, here's the second - and this one perhaps packs more of a punch.

I said earlier that our industry finds itself at a crossroads.

And of course, this is not uncommon – we've been here before.

And we've endured and adapted to change – bp's 60 years in the North Sea alone is testament to that.

We've always managed to move forward against even the strongest headwinds and greatest odds.

I believe that's largely down to the pioneering spirit of our people I mentioned earlier.

It's in this industry's DNA to keep going. To keep pushing. And to keep evolving as the world around us changes.

But why - Why indeed?

Well, it's the right thing to do to provide energy for this country and for the world.

And it's the right thing to do for the people. Those who support this great industry with such passion and pride and want to play a key role in the energy transition.

And here's the good news – and we could all use some of that right now.

The North Sea sector *can* continue to support today's energy needs while playing a vital role in the energy transition as it gathers pace.

Just look at what bp is doing in this space in the UK.

Working with ENBW on the planned Morven wind project offshore Aberdeen which, when operational, could power an estimated three million homes.

Partnering with Aberdeen City Council to develop a green hydrogen hub in the city.

With our joint ventures, working to develop CO2 storage off the coast of England.

And yes, producing oil and gas for as long as they're needed. Safely, responsibly whilst looking for new ways to lower emissions.

This is an industry abundant with brilliant projects being delivered by exceptional people.

But an orderly energy transition can only happen if we have an investment environment that allows our projects to remain competitive.

Let me repeat = But an orderly energy transition can only happen if we have an investment environment that allows our projects to remain competitive.

That means competitive in the global landscape.

And why is that important? It is important because it allows our people and supply chain to continue to prosper, as new green energy opportunities ramp up.

I'm grateful to have colleagues from both the UK and Scottish Governments in attendance today and thank them for adding an important voice to our sector.

It's reassuring to hear the UK Government recognise the importance of the UK's oil and gas workforce and the role oil and gas has in the UK's energy mix for decades to come.

In fact, the government recently said something that really resonated with me, and I quote:

"Crucially, oil and gas production in the North Sea will be a key component of the UK energy landscape for decades to come as it transitions to our clean energy future in a way that protects jobs.

"The government believes that offshore workers will lead the world in the industries of the future".

I couldn't agree more. But – and there is a but - we need a fiscal and regulatory environment that enables that.

At the end of the day, bp's North Sea business needs to stand on its own two feet in our global portfolio.

But in a scenario where my business becomes uncompetitive against investment options elsewhere in the world, and this is likely true for the rest of the industry - our basin will lose out.

That means opportunities missed by my colleagues in bp. By my fellow North Sea operators and the supply chain – many of whom are here in the room today.

But it also means bad news for the ambition, that *I think* or at least hope, industry and government share - a *just* energy transition.

And back to my story analogy – we just need to get on the same page in terms of fiscal and regulatory regime required – in order to achieve this.

Not least for the future of our planet and many thousands of people and their families whose livelihoods depend on this industry.

People with stories to share about what it has, and continues, to mean to them.

Indulge me for a moment – let me start with mine.

When I was a little girl, growing up on the banks of the River Danube in my native Austria, I was a shy child, I know hard to believe today! But I was never one to shy away from life's complexities.

I had a natural instinct for finding solutions and an inherent passion for science and maths.

Around the same time that I started primary school, bp discovered the Clair field, west of Shetland, which remains the largest hydrocarbon accumulation in western Europe.

Some 40 years later, I found myself in Aberdeen leading bp's North Sea subsurface team - responsible for that same field and celebrating the start-up of its second phase of production, the Clair Ridge platform.

I was drawn to the North Sea because of all the technical challenges it had to offer for that same curious mind forged in my childhood back when Clair was discovered in the 1970s.

I could never have imagined the career this industry – and now this basin – has offered me.

I could never have known I'd find my home from home in the Granite city.

And I could never imagine that I'd be here today as bp's first female to lead the North Sea business, sharing my story with you all.

And mine is not the only story that centres on Clair.

The Pitcaithly family for example- some of the faces that flashed up in the video I played earlier. Three generations of the same family who too have forged careers in the North Sea.

Lara – a 23-year-old apprentice who began working on the Clair Phase One platform five years ago.

Her father, Graeme, also works for bp here, in the control room on Clair Ridge.

And Graeme's father – Lara's grandfather, John - came up through the bp ranks in the North Sea working on the Forties Alpha platform.

Lara's inspiration as a youngster was her father and grandfather – she was telling me a few months ago when I saw her while I was offshore - that she'd ask hundreds of questions about what they did and what everything was called.

And that curious mind now turns to today's challenges.

Lara has a passion about the energy transition knowing the skills she is building today in oil and gas will take her down new pathways tomorrow.

She'd like those pathways to still be with bp here in the North Sea – and so would I.

But for Lara and her peers, this can only happen if this industry continues to prosper, under the right conditions.

I'm sure everyone in this room agrees that the headlines being written about our industry today are *not* ones any of us like to read.

And trust me, I'd have much rather focused wholly on our 60-year anniversary in the Energy Voice article waiting for you on your seats this morning.

Just last week – Wood Mackenzie published a report with another worrying headline – it read:

UK North Sea on the brink: why fiscal reform can't wait.

The report presented detailed analysis showing the North Sea industry could be fatally wounded in less than five years under a worst-case investment scenario, where capital allowances are removed.

Ours is a complex industry and if I'm honest we've not always been great at articulating those complexities in a compelling way or fan-faring our successes and triumphs.

Or explaining and reminding how our industry contributes to people's day to day lives through, heat, light, mobility, textiles, pharmaceuticals and even the lubricants and greases required by renewable energy equipment and so much more.

But one thing we have done is repeatedly face up to challenge.

We've pioneered. We've pivoted. We've evolved. And we've never rested on our laurels.

And I think I can speak for many of us in the room when I say we want to keep doing that.

We know there are opportunities for our people and our projects to keep supplying the energy the world needs today – the country needs today - while progressing together through the energy transition.

But we also know this can only happen if the investment conditions around us allow. I cannot stress this point enough.

So, if I could end by injecting a call to action to everyone in the room.

Share your own stories like I have today. And let's make sure the book about the North Sea has many good chapters ahead and doesn't finish on a cliffhanger.

Thank you.