

IN UK FIRST, PENSION SCHEME MEMBERS MASS MOBILISED OVER OIL SANDS RESOLUTIONS

A nation-wide coalition of organisations will today begin an unprecedented mobilisation of the public to petition their pension funds in support of oil sands resolutions due to be voted on at the BP and Shell AGMs this Spring.

Today (22 February) FairPensions, with the support of The Co-operative, launches an innovative new internet tool which, for the first time, enables individuals to contact their pension providers requesting that they back the resolutions. Organisations who will be mobilising members and supporters include The Co-operative, Greenpeace, WWF, Platform, UNISON and PCS.

FairPensions will also be sending out briefings which make the business case in favour of the resolutions to hundreds of pension funds and fund managers in the UK and globally.

Oil sands (also known as tar sands) are amongst the world's most controversial industrial projects due to the extremely high levels of carbon emissions (conversion into fuel produces on average 3 times the greenhouse gas emissions of conventional oil), huge quantities of toxic waste produced, local air and water pollution, deforestation, and indigenous community impacts.

The resolutions, which were co-filed by a diverse group of fund managers, pension funds, foundations and faith groups in the largest coalition of its kind seen in the UK, call upon BP and Shell to report on the investment risks associated with tar sands projects and their plans to address them, citing greenhouse gas emissions, environmental damage and impacts upon indigenous communities.

This follows investor concerns that these companies are failing to properly account for future legislation over carbon emissions, high operational costs, environmental clean up costs and the risk of litigation as a result of indigenous community impacts. Resolution co-filers feel this is not a prudent approach and the companies are risking both financial and reputational damage in the long term by developing what some investors view to be unsustainable assets.

The web tool, located at www.countingthecost.org.uk is intended to provide individuals with a quick and easy means of contacting their pension provider. Behind the web tool sits an extensive database of pension funds and fund managers that have holdings in BP and Shell.

The Co-operative, as well as financially supporting the project, will be contacting hundreds of thousands of its members and customers and asking them to back the two motions and take advantage of this exciting new opportunity to encourage environmental sustainability.

Catherine Howarth, Chief Executive of FairPensions said: "This AGM season could herald a new era of public accountability for companies and their investors. People do not always realise that their pension provider holds shares in major companies on their behalf. Anyone with pension savings has a right to lobby their fund manager on how to vote on these vitally important resolutions."

Dave Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON, said "UNISON's staff pension co-filed these resolutions and now we're getting the word out to our 1.3 million members in Britain's public services, encouraging them to express support to their pension funds and savings institutions. Our members' pension funds have an estimated investment value of £250bn so at UNISON we understand the need for a low carbon economy. We're not convinced that exploitation of tar sands is a responsible choice for the future. These resolutions demand the clear answers from oil companies which our members need and deserve."

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We can also make available copies of the resolutions and supporting statements, images or any other document cited in this press release.

Notes for editors:

About Oil sands

Oil sands (also known as tar sands) are the second largest oil resource in the world, comprising some 173Bn barrels in reserves. Converting them into usable form of fuel produces on average 3 times the greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional oil extraction.

Even using the oil industry's favoured measure (from oil well to car exhaust), oil from this source emits between 15% and 40% more greenhouse gases than the average of conventional sources. Industry claims about the affordability and efficacy of carbon capture and storage as a solution to tar sands' financial and environmental problems are also increasingly questioned.

Canada is already on course to miss its Kyoto protocol targets and the expansion of tar sands will make all but impossible any efforts to cut emissions on 1990 levels.

Oil sands are now prompting legal challenges from local indigenous communities such as the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, who are affected by pollution, deforestation and wildlife disturbance from tar sands developments. They claim breaches of the constitutional rights protecting their traditional livelihoods.

About the resolutions

The resolution BP plc and Royal Dutch Shell plc have confirmed that the resolutions are valid, and will be discussed at their AGMs on 15 April 2010 (TBC) and 18th May 2010 respectively.

The resolutions ask the companies to commission and review reports setting out the assumptions made by the Company in deciding to precede with oil sands projects regarding future carbon prices, oil price volatility, demand for oil, anticipated regulation of greenhouse gas emissions and legal and reputational risks arising from local environmental damage and impairment of traditional livelihoods. The resolutions ask that the findings of the report and review should be reported to investors in 2011.

About FairPensions

FairPensions campaigns for UK pension funds and fund managers to adopt responsible investment practices, managing environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues which have the potential to be financially relevant.

FairPensions is supported by a number of leading charities and trade unions, including ActionAid, Amnesty, BECTU, CAFOD, Community, CWU, ECCR, EIRiS, Greenpeace, NUJ, Occupational Pensioners' Alliance, Oxfam, PCS, Traidcraft, Unison, Unite and WWF, as well as thousands of individuals.

www.fairpensions.org.uk