

FRIENDS Of the NEW FOREST (NFA)

For Immediate Release

Date: 23 September, 2024

New Forest Environmental Group Expresses Concern Against Exxon Pipeline in the Solent

One of the world's oldest conservation charities and environmental groups has expressed concern about, and strong opposition to, Exxon Mobil's proposed pipeline in the Solent. Exxon Mobil is seeking approval for the Solent CO2 Pipeline Project, which would create a major pipe running from its Fawley oil refinery near Southampton to a CO2 storage site under the English Channel. The company says the pipeline is critical for introducing Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) to the Solent area, which would help to reduce carbon emissions and meet Government targets.

Sarah Nield, Chairman of the New Forest Association (NFA) also known as Friends of the New Forest, said, 'this project will involve development activities that will devastate the area. The New Forest and Solent are both designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and EU-designated Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). It supports rich biodiversity, including rare species of birds, fish, and marine plants'. The mainland route also runs through areas of the National Park

The NFA has warned that the project poses significant threats to the region's fragile ecosystem because of the mining activity that would be required to lay the pipeline and the building of permanent above ground monitoring structures. Significant disturbance to a wide range of bird and marine life and habitats is inevitable. The charity argues that any industrial-scale disturbance to the protected biodiversity and delicate environment, runs counter to the need to transition to clean, renewable energy sources. The process of CCS is controversial and expensive, they argue. They are particularly opposed to the option of running the pipeline beneath the New Forest and close to centres of housing before sending it out under the sea near Milford on Sea given the threat to this most highly protected area as well as the unknown safety implications.

There are growing fears that pipeline construction and operation would lead to:

- **Habitat destruction:** Dredging, drilling, and underwater construction could devastate forest and marine habitats, including ancient woodlands, coastal marshes and vital seagrass beds all of which support protected species.
- **Pollution risks:** Any leak or spill from the pipeline would have catastrophic consequences for the eco-systems, water quality, threatening wildlife and local agriculture and fisheries.
- **Greenwashing:** Greenpeace claim the technology is currently unproven in reducing emissions from fossil fuel use and industry at an affordable cost. The Campaign Against Climate Change say that the vast majority of carbon capture has been for natural gas processing, not at fossil fuelled power plants. The few power CCS projects have performed poorly, and been beset with technological problems

and outages. In 2023, global energy watchdog International Energy Agency called on oil and gas companies to let go of 'the illusion that implausibly large amounts of carbon capture are the solution'.

Sarah Nield, continued, 'this project is attracting opposition from across the region, not just because of the negative environmental impact it will have and financial implications and costs , but more widely global energy watchdogs are critical of Exxon Mobil for using CCS as a greenwashing tactic. We are asking all our supporters and protectors of the New Forest, including the Solent, to join us in opposing this scheme'.

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