

BP are here today to sell themselves as a cutting edge company who have the right response to deal with our energy needs in the face of Peak Oil and climate change. We're from Thames Valley Climate Action and we believe the potentially devastating consequences of climate change put a huge question mark over our future. Many of you will share our concerns and we hope you'll make an informed choice about whether BP really do have what it takes to take us into the future.

Climate change is the biggest challenge facing humanity today. BP has acknowledged this with a 600 million dollar green rebranding operation. But they spent more on their rebranding than they did on renewables is a year, so what does 'beyond' petroleum really mean?

So many companies are paying lip service to climate change and it may be easy to lose touch with the devastating human consequences of this - so let's just remind ourselves of what's at stake here:

According to the WHO 200,000 people a year are already dying from the effects of climate change.

Advancing deserts and flooding caused by sea level rises could lead to the loss of a third of the world's fertile land within your lifetime, resulting food riots, mass starvation, drought and water shortage beyond anything we have seen so far.

It has the potential to dwarf the death count of all the twentieth century's wars. And more wars can be expected to result from the rush for resources like land and food in a deficit world.

Climate change needs to be seen as the greatest moral issue of our age, and energy companies are major players who have a serious responsibility to address this - uncompromisingly and immediately.

As the burning of fossil fuels results in CO₂, there is a direct link between BP and the greatest problem mankind has ever faced. Climate change urgency has sparked a proliferation of ethical promises, but these must be more than a PR tool to legitimate continued profit from oil in the short term. At the moment BP do invest alternatives, but their money still comes from petroleum. If their core business is the cause of the problem then no green add-ons can

provide the solution. If BP continues to pursue oil as their core business then the energy solutions a safe future demands are not in BP's hands.

Let's not forget about the human rights considerations: petroleum extraction is consistently associated with poverty, militarization and local environmental degradation. Human Rights Watch details specific problems around BP's operations in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and in Indonesia. In Alaska BP has been fined for fraud and environmental crimes relating to oil spills. BP has no compunction about lending legitimacy to the Indonesian occupation in West Papua, where human rights groups estimate 100,000 have been killed by government forces. These problems are common to all oil companies. However much BP may claim to be exceptional, their profits from oil extraction are inevitably at the expense of local populations. If you are thinking about working for BP, you'll have to consider whether such human rights abuses are something you want to be associated with.

So, do BP have the right response to climate change? Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute reports that to keep atmospheric CO₂ concentration at a safe level, we can only afford to burn 20% of the fossil fuels we know about, and we certainly can't afford to go looking for any more.

So if BP is asking where they can find more oil or how to make extraction techniques more viable and cost-effective, then they are asking the wrong question. The real question is: how can we decarbonise the energy sector in the next 20 years, in line with the recommendations of the government's independent Committee on Climate Change.

Oil was pivotal to our post-industrial development. It has shaped our history. But oil has had its time. The simple fact is that in the face of current problems we can no longer keep burning fossil fuels. Environmental policies and expansion into alternatives are thwarted when coupled with oil discovery and extraction.

As graduates with a top quality education, you have the opportunity to be at the forefront of where we go next with our planet. If you want a career in energy, that's great. But is BP really where you want to be? There are exciting up and coming companies out there with the emerging technologies that can really build our future.

The crucial questions we must ask about BP are how far and how quickly they are going 'beyond' petroleum.
Of course BP are making changes to their business, if they don't, their company won't survive when we hit Peak Oil. But to secure a future for us all we need to veer sharply away from fossil fuel consumption before we reach Peak Oil.

Please do not misunderstand us; we are pleased that BP is investing some cash in renewables, but for as long as it continues to maintain a target of 100% oil reserve replacement, it continues to be responsible for at least 570m tonnes of CO₂ entering the atmosphere each year. If you go along with the scientific consensus on the likely effects of global warming, you have to ask yourself whether you are really OK with becoming part of this industry.

BP may be moving beyond petroleum, but the kind of changes we need in the time scale we have may be beyond BP.