

East Anglia THREE  
Offshore Windfarm

East Anglia THREE

# Nautilus Associates 2016

Document Reference – Deadline 2/First Written  
Questions/ Nautilus Associates 2016/ SE5





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## Taskforce Taking Action To Support Oil & Gas Industry

0 | posted on March 1, 2016 | comments 0 (<http://www.newanglia.co.uk/2016/03/01/taskforce-taking-action-to-support-oil-gas-industry/#respond>)

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Over £300K LEP and Local Authority financial support.

A package of measures aimed at supporting struggling businesses and employees in the oil and gas sector is to be launched.

The LEP's Oil and Gas Taskforce was set up last year in response to the significant challenges facing the sector in Suffolk and Norfolk. The dramatic drop in the oil price has impacted on the confidence and investment plans of major energy firms, resulting in job losses and cost-cutting across the industry. The downturn is particularly hitting SMEs in the region's energy supply chain. The fear is prices could stay lower for longer.

Research conducted for the Taskforce and local authorities by Nautilus Associates showed that 26 companies had filed for administration in the Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth area between April and October 2015 and more than 1000 people made redundant, while many companies are asking staff to take unpaid leave or salary reductions.

Now the Taskforce which includes local MPs, business leaders, Jobcentre Plus, and local authorities, has agreed a package of measures prioritising three key areas. The plans come as energy leaders from across the region gather at EEEGR's Southern North Sea (SNS 2016) conference in Norfolk tomorrow (March 2)

- Oil and Gas businesses:

An initial free face to face assessment by New Anglia LEP's Growth Hub advisers, followed, if required, by a 50% discount towards a more intensive support package provided by specialist consultants.\* This will include advice on diversification, re-structuring and alternative growth opportunities as well as developing business plans. The discount will be funded by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils and Waveney District and Great Yarmouth Borough Councils who have set aside £80,000.

In addition the LEP is modifying its flagship Growing Business Fund grant scheme to support and sustain future business plans. £250,000 will be set aside for this purpose.\*\*

- Oil and Gas employees and skills:

Support for those losing their jobs to retrain, find alternative employment or maintain their industry certifications. Assistance will be offered via Jobcentre Plus to ensure that displaced workers are properly supported to access new job opportunities within the local area.

The Taskforce will also work with local colleges and training providers to ensure access to relevant training courses. For example; specialist energy trainer, Petans will be offering up to 40% off a range of refresher training courses to experienced workers who have been made redundant, in order that they can maintain their skills to benefit them in future job opportunities. And Lowestoft College will be offering similar discounts for specific oil and gas-related safety training refresher courses.

- Continuing to campaign to Government:

To provide support for the Southern North Sea, including recognising it as needing dedicated economic assistance similar to that provided in Scotland and a reduction in taxation.

Mark Goodall, LEP board member and Chair of the Oil and Gas Taskforce said:

"We set up the Taskforce to address the very real problems our energy businesses are facing, now we have real tangible measures that are going to address some of their core issues – expert advice on how to identify threats and opportunities, and bespoke financial support that will help sustain and build on new business plans. And if the worst does happen there will be targeted support for those who might be displaced to ensure they can access new jobs and valuable skills are not lost."

Peter Aldous, MP for Waveney, has recently written to the Prime Minister requesting a package of support for the industry as a whole, including tax reductions. He has also asked for specific support for the Southern North Sea including the work of the taskforce and the business and employment support being offered.

He said: "Following on from my question to the Prime Minister at PMQs and my subsequent letter to him, I have helped secure a three-hour debate on Thursday to highlight the challenges facing the sector and to identify the support measures that are required to help get businesses and employees through these difficult times and to ensure a sustainable and productive future for this valuable industry."

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Brandon Lewis, MP for Great Yarmouth said: "I welcome the LEP and local authority investment in the energy sector at a time when the industry is experiencing difficulties due to the fall in world oil prices. It's important that these businesses, which are so vital to Great Yarmouth, are given all the support they need in order to keep jobs local and encourage further investment in the area."

John Dugmore and Caroline Williams from Suffolk and Norfolk Chambers of Commerce said: "The oil and gas sector is clearly experiencing significant challenges, but it is encouraging to see both public and private organisations working in partnership to ensure our local businesses get the help and support they need, to take advantage of the opportunities that do exist now and in the future."

Leader of Suffolk County Council, Cllr Colin Noble said: "The oil and gas sector in our area is currently facing a challenging time as a result of global factors and we are working closely with regional partners to do all we can and to support the many businesses and local people affected by this downturn."

Colleen Walker, Chairman of the Economic Development Sub-Committee said: "These are important interventions and I am pleased the County Council, and our partners, have been able to support them. The current downturn in the oil and gas sector is unprecedented, but I believe it is vital we do what we can to sustain as much as possible of our local skills base and supply chain."

Cllr Graham Plant, the leader of Great Yarmouth Borough Council, said: "The current global economic challenges in oil and gas are well known, however in the medium and long term, the East of England has very bright prospects for benefitting from billions of pounds of investment in energy, including in offshore windfarms, decommissioning, nuclear, and oil and gas exploration. In the meantime, this targeted support package will help to mitigate the immediate, unavoidable effects on local businesses and workers – and to ensure they are best placed to capture the benefits of future opportunities."

- New Anglia Growth Hub provides free and impartial face-to-face business support in Norfolk and Suffolk via ten mobile Business Growth Advisers. To request a free appointment, call 0300 333 6536, email [growthhub@newanglia.co.uk](mailto:growthhub@newanglia.co.uk) or visit the website [www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk)

- Jobcentre Plus's Energy Employer Adviser is Heidi King and can be contacted on [Heidi.king@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Heidi.king@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) – 01493 633353

Notes To Editors:

\*Operated by Norfolk County Council on behalf of the LEP, Suffolk County Council, Waveney Borough Council and Yarmouth Borough Council. The Growth Hub will help companies to identify a consultant that will suit their needs and then a panel (from Norfolk and Suffolk CC and the LEP) will verify that consultant with Trading Standards and CIFAS (credit industry fraud avoidance service) before approving the 50% discount. The scheme will identify the main threats facing the company, identify opportunities to help survival and build a case for continued financial investment.

\*\*Businesses with a majority of their business in the oil and gas sector and those who have been through the intensive support package will be eligible.

No comments yet.

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