‘Tsunami’ of industrial action to hit oil and gas operators as 1400 offshore workers set to strike – from Unite the Union

From Unite the Union:

> ***Dozens of platforms in UKCS set to be brought to a ‘standstill’ with BP, Shell and Total hit***
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> *Unite the union announced today (Monday 20 March) that major oil and gas operators in the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) face a‘tsunami’of industrial unrest within weeks as around 1400 offshore workers across five companies demand a better deal on jobs, pay and conditions.*
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> *Unite, whose members will take action at companies enjoying record-busting profits, predicts that platforms and offshore installations will be brought to a‘standstill’due to the specialised roles its members undertake.*
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> *The action will hit major oil and gas operators including BP, CNRI, EnQuest, Harbour, Ithaca, Shell and Total.*
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> *Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said:**“Oil and gas companies have been given free rein to enjoy massive windfall profits in the North Sea; drilling concessions are effectively licences to print money.***
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> ***“1400 offshore workers are now set to take strike action against these employers who are raking it but refusing to givethem a fair share of the pie. This will create a tsunami of industrial unrest in the offshore sector.***

“Unite will support these members every step of the way in their fight for better jobs, pay and conditions.”

The prospective action includes electrical, production and mechanical technicians in addition to deck crew, scaffolders crane operators, pipefitters, platers, and riggers working for Bilfinger UK Limited, Stork construction, Petrofac Facilities Management, the Wood Group UK Limited and Sparrows Offshore Services.

*John Boland, Unite industrial officer, added:**“Unite has received unprecedented support in favour of industrial action in the UK Continental Shelf. It is the biggest mandate we have received in a generation in the offshore sector. There is no doubt that this is directly linked to oil and gas companies reaping record profits while the workforce gets scraps from the table.***

“Unite’s members are angry at the corporate greed being shown by offshore operators and contractors. Now these major global companies are set to face the consequences as dozens of offshore platforms will be brought to a standstill in a matter of weeks.”

Details of the disputes

Around 700 offshore workers atBilfinger UK Limitedare set to down tools after Unite members voted in favour of taking industrial action as part of a pay dispute. Bilfinger workers are demanding an increase above the base rate of pay set in the Energy Services Agreement (ESA) for 2022.

Meanwhile, 350Stork constructionworkers are set to take strike action after Unite members also supported industrial action in a dispute over working rotas and rates of pay.

Unite members employed byPetrofac Facilities Management Limitedon the FPF1 platform also voted in favour of strike action. Around 50 workers are involved in the dispute over

holiday entitlements. Offshore workers can be asked to work at any time for no additional payment. The operator, Ithaca Energy, has a 'clawback' policy of 14 days, double the industry norm of 7 days.

Unite members employed by theWood Group UK Limitedon TAQA platforms similarly voted to take strike action. Around 80 members are involved in the dispute which is focused on a 10 per cent cut made to salaries in 2015 worth around £7,000 a year.

The mandates for industrial action follow the recent announcement by Unite that around 200Sparrows Offshore Servicesworkers will take strike action across more than 20 oil and gas platforms in disputes over pay. Strike action is set to hit various platforms from 29 March and until 7 June in a series of 24, 48 and 72-hour stoppages. This action will hit a number of major operators including BP, Shell, Apache and Harbour Energy.

A further two industrial action ballots are due this week at Petrofac BP involving around 80 workers (21 March), and at Worley Services UK Limited on Harbour Energy platforms involving around 50 workers (24 March) in disputes over pay. The pending ballot results could bring the final total to around 1500 offshore workers taking industrial action.

Unite recently blasted the UK Government's inaction on taxing oil firms as BP posted the biggest profits in its history as it doubled to £23 billion in 2022. BP's bonanza profits come after Shell reports earnings of £32 billion, bringing the combined total profits of the top two energy companies in Britain to a record £55 billion.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Ballot results in full

1. *Bilfinger – Yes to strike action – 97%*

2. *Stork – Yes to strike action – 98%*

3. *Petrofac Facilities Management Limited – Yes to strike action – 100%*

4. *Wood Group UK Limited – Yes to strike action – 93%*

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