

## Permitting decisions- Surrender

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We have decided to accept the surrender of the permit for Ellesmere Port Wellsite operated by Dart Energy (East England) Limited.

The permit number is EPR/BB3708GN/S005.

The decision was issued on 30 March 2026.

We are satisfied that the necessary measures have been taken to avoid any pollution risk and to return the site to a satisfactory state. We consider in reaching this decision that we have taken into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements.

### Purpose of this document

This decision document provides a record of the decision making process. It summarises the decision-making process to show how the main relevant factors have been taken into account.

Read the permitting decisions in conjunction with the environmental permit.

### Decision considerations

#### History of the site and permitting

The operator obtained a permit for a mining waste operation in 03/09/2014. The drilling of the Ellesmere Port 1 (EP-1) Well was completed in December 2014. Following the drilling phase of operations, the EP-1 Well was suspended.

A variation to the existing environmental permit was issued on 10/11/2017. The variation was to include two new installation activities for the storage of crude oil and the incineration (flaring) of natural gas as part of a future testing phase as follows:

- S1.2 A (1) (e): The loading, unloading, handling or storage of, or the physical, chemical or thermal treatment of: (i) crude oil as an activity listed in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.
- S5.1 A (1) (a): The incineration of hazardous waste in a waste incineration plant or waste co-incineration plant with a capacity exceeding 10 tonnes per day.

However, neither of the two new installation activities operated and the site has not gone into production.

On 30/01/2023 a partial surrender was issued to remove the activity for the loading, unloading, handling or storage of crude oil.

This surrender application is to surrender the remaining activities on the permit, namely the mining waste operation and the incineration (flaring) activity, by abandoning and decommissioning the well, removing infrastructure and meeting the requirements of surrender.

The operator will then return the site to the landowner. For clarity, the landowner has requested that the site is not reinstated to its original state (scrubland) as there is the potential that the landowner can re-purpose the site for their own needs.

### **Final site inspection**

The final site inspection took place on 6 November 2025 to observe the condition of the land since the plug and abandonment of the well and ensure the site is in an acceptable condition for surrender.

The condition of the site was considered to be acceptable for surrender.

### **Decommissioning of wells or boreholes**

We are satisfied that decommissioning of the Well EP-1 in the mining waste permit, has been carried out to appropriate standards and in accordance with appropriate guidance, namely [Onshore oil and gas sector guidance - 14. Decommissioning boreholes - Guidance - GOV.UK.](#)

## Site Condition Report Assessment

We required further information from the operator to make our decision. Details of the requests and responses are as follows:

10/12/2025 Schedule 5 Notice requesting additional information regarding the groundwater monitoring data

11/12/2025 Email requesting additional information regarding the analytical suite in relation to groundwater monitoring at surrender

16/12/2025 Email requesting additional information in relation to decommissioning of the well

21/01/2026 Response from the applicant in relation to requests as detailed above (dated 10/12/2025, 11/12/2025 and 16/12/2025)

05/02/2026 Schedule 5 Notice request for information which required a detailed comparison of groundwater quality surrender data against the baseline data, Material Safety Data Sheets for all substances used in the drilling fluids and decommissioning grouts, 2015 HRA report.

24/02/2026 Response to Schedule 5 Notice request for information dated 05/02/2026 in relation to the groundwater monitoring parameter of phenol.

11/03/2026 Extension to Schedule 5 Notice response date for Schedule 5 Notice issued on 05/02/2026. Clarifying the request for information regarding the comparison of the groundwater monitoring data for surrender to the baseline groundwater monitoring.

17/03/2026 Response to Schedule 5 Notice request for information dated 05/02/2026 and clarified by email dated 11/03/2026 - in relation to groundwater monitoring parameters.

The additional information required, related to the groundwater monitoring data included in the application (June 2025) and comparison with the baseline groundwater monitoring data provided prior to operations taking place onsite (2014), and the substances used for the drilling and decommissioning of the well.

The surrender groundwater monitoring data from June 2025 does not include all the parameters that were set at baseline in 2014 and monitored again in 2017.

However, as the Well EP-1 was never used for hydrocarbon production, we amended our requirements to seek demonstration that the land and groundwater are in satisfactory state for surrender with respect to activities and substances associated with the drilling and decommissioning of Well EP-1. Therefore, we then requested clarification on the substances used for the drilling and decommissioning of the well.

Based on the information received there is no reason to suspect that any hazardous pollutants have been used in drilling or decommissioning of the well. The use of citric acid and xanthan gum in the decommissioning may have resulted in the increased Total Organic Carbon (TOC) and decreased pH of the groundwater from monitoring wells around Well EP-1, as detailed in the June 2025 monitoring results. These substances are likely to rapidly degrade in the groundwater environment and therefore are not considered to be a risk to wider groundwater quality.

We are satisfied based on the application and additional information provided to take a risk based decision to surrender the permit, on the basis that the well has never been used for production, the operator has provided the information regarding the substances used in the drilling and decommissioning of Well EP-1 and the surrender groundwater data has confirmed that no PAHs or hydrocarbons have been detected.

Therefore:

We are satisfied that the operator has taken necessary measures to:

- avoid a pollution risk from the operation of the regulated facility; and
- return the site to a satisfactory state, having regard to the state of the site before the facility was put into operation.

## **Confidential information**

A claim for commercial or industrial confidentiality has not been made.

## **Identifying confidential information**

We have not identified information provided as part of the application that we consider to be confidential.

## **Pollution risk**

We are satisfied that the necessary measures have been taken to avoid a pollution risk resulting from the operation of the regulated facility.

## **Satisfactory state**

We are satisfied that the necessary measures have been taken to return the site of the regulated facility to a satisfactory state, having regard to the state of the site before the facility was put into operation.

## **Growth duty**

We have considered our duty to have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth set out in section 108(1) of the Deregulation Act 2015 and the guidance issued under section 110 of that Act in deciding whether to accept this permit surrender.