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1830

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BP oil spill: the pressure grows on the company's non-executive directors

For the tidy sum of £90,000-£115,000 per year, there are four BP non-executive directors in charge of overseeing that the oil giant respects safety, ethics and the environment.

The job of those four people, who attend around 15 meetings a year, is to "identify and mitigate significant non-financial risks". But there has been a marked silence from these – and the other – non-executives since the Deepwater Horizon rig exploded on April 20, killing 11 men and triggering the worst oil spill disaster in US history.

As it becomes clearer that Mr Hayward and his chairman, Carl-Henric Svanberg, are unlikely to survive the crisis, many in the City believe this is the time for the non-executives to be awaking from their apparent slumber.

The most senior independent board member is Sir Bill Castell – a former adviser to Gordon Brown and previous chief executive of Amersham. Having built up and sold Amersham to General Electric for £5 billion, the 63 year-old is currently chairman of the Wellcome Trust, the charitable £6 billion private investor. He has become a prominent spokesman for corporate Britain, recently criticising the UK for being "no longer the natural home for global business". But he is not well known as a voice for BP.