



FFBRA NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWENTY FIVE

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR OUR MEMBERS

WSSC Planning Officer's Recommends Cuadrilla's Application

Mike Elkington, WSSC Planning Officer, has recommended that planning be granted to Cuadrilla to return to Lower Stumble and flow test.

This is obviously very disappointing. However, we should remember that there is considerable precedent in councillors ignoring the recommendation of the planning officer. The Penland Farm housing development was rejected last month; and last week all three applications for solar energy farm sites in West Sussex were rejected by councillors despite the recommendation of the planning officer who recommended two for acceptance and one for refusal. Roger Arthur (UKIP, Chanctonbury) said that despite what the government supports, the council should not be 'intimidated by government diktat.'

Let FFBRA know of anything that is incorrect in the Planning Officer's Recommendation.

Please read the Planning Officer's report, which has been sent to you with the newsletter, carefully and check his statements as to their veracity. Email me with anything you feel is incorrect or that you think FFBRA should challenge in his report. This will help us prepare our statements against the proposal for the meeting of the 29 April.

Abandoned Well Sites to be targeted across Sussex

It is acknowledged that Balcombe is being used as a test case for Sussex (and indeed the UK) for shale oil/gas development. Section 9 of Mike Elkington's report, if accepted as a valid basis for consent, means that abandoned wells sites will be targeted across Sussex. This will have serious repercussions for the whole of Sussex.

The logic being used in section 9 by Mike Elkington in his recommendation is:

- It is a requirement under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to check and see if there are better alternative sites

- The operator can only do this within his PEDL licence
- The operator needs geological information to assess this.
- **Therefore** he should choose between existing drilled sites.

In the case of Balcombe the alternative choices are stated to be Bolney-1 (three miles south of Balcombe) or Lower Stumble.

This is important to Sussex as there are 84 of these oil and gas wells stretching across the county, most of which have been abandoned and in many cases people are unaware of their existence. If the argument by Mike Elkington, WSCC Planning, is accepted, this will set a precedence that these be 84 sites be prioritised when selecting future sites.

Where are these sites? And what is their history?

Attached with this newsletter is a spreadsheet from DECC listing all the onshore oil and gas wells. If you filter on column Q you can select county so you can see the ones in West and East Sussex. This spreadsheet contains basis information – location in terms of longitude and latitude, when it was drilled and who by and the well reference number.

If you want to find out more about any of these sites then you need to contact a data agent. The government has privatised the holding of UK oil and gas site data to four data agents. FFBRA contacted several of them in order to buy data about the Balcombe-1 site drilled by Conoco in 1986 TGS was the first back with a quote and so FFBRA purchased the data from them.

“TGS is one of several data release agents licensed by DECC to supply scanned images and digital information from oil and gas wells drilled in the UK and released by DECC under the Petroleum License Act. The attached map shows the location of wells drilled in an around the Balcombe Area for which such data may be obtained. Scanned images of the logs and reports for these wells may be purchased from TGS at a cost of \$100 per well, however, under the license terms of the purchase these data may not be copied or given to anyone other than the licensee. For further information please contact Steve Allen (steve.allen@tgs.com) or visit our web site www.tgs.com”

Without buying this data FFBRA would not have been aware that Conoco punctuated the well casing of the Balcombe 1 with multiple holes along two forty foot sections so that they could apply 6,000 gallons of 15% hydrochloric acid to the micrite shale.

The map supplied by TGS shows some of the wells within 50 miles of Balcombe. It is not complete because it only shows wells for which TGS can release data. Well data is not released for a certain period of time in order to protect the commercial

interests of the drilling company. So for example the new well at Balcombe is not shown – nor the well drilled at Markwell’s Wood.

Some of the Oil and Gas sites within 50 miles of Balcombe



Lobbying

Apparently this is now a £2 billion industry in Britain. To understand how the lobbying industry works, we will continue to look at some of the dubious techniques being used to manipulate public opinion.

Lobbying Techniques – Fake Case Studies

Mark Hadley, Corporate Communications Management at the CBI (Confederation of British Industry), has included Cuadrilla’s community engagement as one of a number featured on their website to illustrate a new report “Building Trust: making the public case for infrastructure”.

<http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/case-studies/2014/04/cuadrilla/>

It is hard to imagine a worst choice of company to use to illustrate building community trust.

This is an important matter as “lack of community engagement” is grounds for WSCC to reject Cuadrilla’s application. Instead of risking genuine community engagement, Cuadrilla has decided to get the CBI to fake it for them. Is there anything we can do about this?

If any of our members or Friends of FFBRA are members of the CBI, please could you help us resolve this matter, Mr Hadley can be contacted by email.

Mark.Hadley@cbi.org.uk.

One of our members has already written the following to Mr Hadley

“I am a resident of Balcombe, West Sussex and have had reason to contact Cuadrilla on a few occasions and can advise that they are one of the most unreliable companies I have had the misfortune to make enquiries to. Rather than the community engagement your statement talks about it is absolutely the opposite. As recently as 6 days ago I contacted the 'community help line for Balcombe'. If you ring this line you are met with an individual who doesn't necessarily work for Cuadrilla and someone who will not give their full name nor an email address you can write to. Rather as a concerned resident one must recite a question and leave a contact number so that the semi anonymous call taker can get back to you. Most recently on 10th April I asked a question regarding health and safety, I was answered by 'Simon' who doesn't have a last name and there is no chance of me talking to him again. He said he had taken note of my questions and would get back to me. I do not expect to hear back I never do and so far no call back!

I attended the Cuadrilla drop in session in 2013; I went to be assured that the process about to be employed in Balcombe village was safe. The engagement on the day was mainly from a PR company who had no answers and were ill informed. When I eventually talked with an employee from Cuadrilla and asked about how they would put things right if the worst happened I was horrified to be told that if it goes wrong there is NO putting it right - it would be forever damaged. He then crossed his fingers and said lets hope the risk assessments are right and the risk is low!! At this point I decided that this is madness it is not engagement nor discussion, it is risk taking gone too far. Cuadrilla is hell bent, at any cost to the community to continue with their plan.

It has been suggested by Cuadrilla that any and all opposition to their plans was from outside of the village it is not true. If Cuadrilla had any real engagement with members of the community I live in they would know, but for the villagers' support the camp would not have been able to stay. The people at the camp included many, many local residents and the residents and protectors engaged with us each day.

Cuadrilla make empty promises - they said that they would take anyone from the village to the drill site but when I asked the HSE manager said NO, his reason 'the risks are too high' and 'if we let you come onsite we'll have to let others'.

Please then allow discussion from both sides before printing the views of one side of a dispute. I ask that you withdraw the statement that states that Cuadrilla have engaged with the community THEY HAVE NOT.”

Balcombe is launching a community solar project, REPOWERBalcombe

This is a community project which has been set up to invest in local solar power. REPOWERBalcombe is independent of FFBRA and any other Balcombe societies. Below is a quote from their website.

“This spring we need to raise around £300,000 to produce around 224kw of PV solar power. This is the equivalent of 7.5% of Balcombe’s current electricity usage – or enough to repower 60 of our village’s 760 homes. We have already set up a co-operative (REPOWERBalcombe Ltd, an Industrial Provident Society) and will look to sell investment in the form of shares to the community. Shares can be bought from £250 upwards with the controlling investors coming only from the local area, and we aim to provide shareholders with returns of around 5% per annum (hopefully rising to more like 6.5% if we can secure tax relief under the Enterprise Investment Scheme). The power produced at the installations that make up this first programme of work will also generate around £5,500 each year for our community benefit fund.

Our first site to sign on the dotted line is the third-generation family-run Grange Farm on Crawley Down, who will be hosting 19kW of solar panels on their cow shed in exchange for 33% discounted energy for the next 25 years”.

For more information go to <http://www.repowerbalcombe.com/>

EVENTS

Balcombe.

Balcombe Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 23 April 8.00 pm

Bramble Hall, Balcombe. Please attend. There will be a report from the Oil and Gas Working Group and a discussion on goals to be achieved in advance of the Parish Council elections to be held May 2015 when all the councillors will step down and the village will be given the opportunity to elect councillors.

Coffee and a Chat, Half Moon Pub, Thursday 24 April 10.30 am to 12.00 noon

Do come along. Great coffee, pastries and good company.

Cuadrilla’s Application goes before the WSCC Planning Committee, Tuesday 29 April, 10.30 am but please arrive early to get a seat

To be held in Horsham (normally this would be held in Chichester but it has been relocated due to a problem with the roof in the offices at Chichester). The gallery holds 100. Please come and support our speakers who will be presenting the reasons why planning should not be granted to Cuadrilla to the councillors. It is very important to have as many Balcombe residents in the public gallery as possible.

Beyond Balcombe

Forest Row, Vision of Sussex, Ten years on,

Saturday 26 April 10.15 am to 4 pm

Ruskin Hall, by Top Cark Park, Emerson College, Forest Row, Sussex RH18 5JX

A day of talks, forum, photos giving a vision of today's Sussex and tomorrow's prospects.

Hosted by Vanessa Underwood. To book lunch email info@orpheonvoices.co.uk

Admission free. Donations welcome.

10.15 am Coffee and introductions

10.45 am Forum

12.45 pm Lunch (or bring your own)

1.45 pm Artwork, Slides, Short film (An Autumn Diary by Phillip Davidson)

2.15 pm Ian Crane

3.15 pm Final Plenum with Youth Vision

4.00 pm Tea and Music with Portia Cox and Ben Grove

4.30 pm Optional Free Space for Discussion

Speakers/ Musicians

Ian Crane (Oil Executive)

Wendy Cook (Real Nutrition)

John Twyford (Dairy Farmer)

John Marking (Forestry)

Portia Cox and Ben Grove (Musicians)

David Pinnegar (Physicist)

Others (a lawyer, a conservationist, a water researcher)

Autumn Diary, a film by the Philip Davidson, Tuesday 29 April 2014

Philip Davidson is a filmmaker who lives in Sussex and I absolutely love his work.

Some of you will remember him a couple of years ago showing his films about the English countryside to the Balcombe History Society in the Victory Hall.

Philip has produced a film which looks at Sussex and fracking.

To see a clip from his new film go to <http://www.autumn-diary.org/>

29th April 7.15 - 9.30 Zu Studios, Phoenix Industrial Estate, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2QJ - film followed by panel debate.

Date of Publication of FFBRA Newsletter Twenty Four: Friday 18 April 2014