

Minutes of Public Meeting Held on 28 January 2015

Re: Harlequin 3 Well Site

6pm, Grange Hall

In Attendance:

Panel:

David Messina, Managing Director, Hutton Energy, UK Ltd
Tim Turner, Senior Practitioner, N.C.C. Planning Group
Mark Haslam, Environment Manager, Environment Agency
Kate Griffith, Technical Specialist RSR, Environment Agency
Roger Upton, R.O.T Parish Council Chairman

In the Audience:

Anna McMaster, Communications Manager, Hutton Energy UK Ltd
Johnathan Foster, Health and Safety Manger, Hutton Energy UK Ltd
Aaron Hand, Curtin Consultants
Martin Culshaw – Local Resident and Semi-Retired Geologist
Jacki Grice, Parish Clerk
Some members of the Parish Council
Cllr Neil Clarke, Local Councillor, Rushcliffe Borough Council
Approx 200 Members of the Public

Press:

BBC Radio Nottingham
Nottingham Post

1. Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Roger Upton said that he would be Chairing the meeting and he introduced the panel and addressed housekeeping matters.

2. Apologies

Cllr Kay Cutts, Nottinghamshire County Councillor (Cllr Cutts provided a statement to be read out later in the meeting.)

3. Format of the Meeting

Cllr Upton advised of the format of the meeting, including presentations and a question and answer session at the end.

Some background information was provided:

- This public meeting has been arranged at short notice due to the Environment Agency's consultation deadline of 03 February 2015.
- The Parish Council informs residents of significant local issues by the following methods, village newsletter, parish notice board, website and social media, liaison with Radcliffe Residents Associations and groups and holds public meetings when required. The public are also welcome to attend Parish Council meetings.
- The Parish Council is consulted on planning applications but does not have any decision making powers. This is the responsibility of the County and Borough Councils and other Statutory Bodies such as the Environment Agency.
- Since 1999 there have been several planning applications approved for the exploratory drilling of the Harlequin 3 site, the latest was October 2014.
- The Environment Agency has now received an application for both an environmental permit and radioactive substances regulation permit from Hutton Energy UK LTD for the management of extractive mining waste and the management of naturally occurring

radioactive material (NORM), resulting from the prospecting for oil and gas at Harlequin 3 well site, land adjacent to A52, Grantham Road, Radcliffe on Trent.

- If the exploratory works are successful, a separate planning application would need to be submitted for commercial long term drilling.

4. Presentation from a Representative of Hutton Energy UK Ltd

David Messina, MD, Hutton Energy UK Ltd summarised the intentions of the company:

- Hutton have an open policy and welcome the opportunity to speak with the community. It is a private company of experienced professionals that acquired Newton Energy in November 2014 and so assuming responsibility for the Harlequin 3 planning procedures. The site was originally identified in the 1950's by the National Coal Board.
- Hutton Energy UK Ltd has received planning permission to drill two exploratory wells to 950m. The bore well is made of steel and cement. This is a conventional well and operations will **not** involve the process of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking").
- The well site consists of 2 acres. The 4 week exploratory programme would include 24/7 drilling and lighting. The rig would be 18-20m in height. One week for the equipment set up, two weeks drilling and one week equipment dismantling.
- Noise assessments have been carried out and the emissions are similar to those of daytime traffic. Current daytime traffic levels are 42-48 decibels in comparison to 39-43 for the drilling.
- Samples will be taken during test drilling and data analysed to see if successful. If not, the site will be abandoned and restored to its original state. If there is evidence of commercial quantities of oil then separate planning applications and permits would be needed to proceed with commercial production.
- The infrastructure of the site will be of high standard incorporating an industrial driveway for vehicles, a small pump and various equipment for storage.
- There will be approx. 20-30 trucks per week going on site for the set up and dismantling weeks and 2-3 trucks per day whilst drilling is carried out. If long term drilling happens then 2-3 trucks per day will be the norm.

5. Presentation from a Representative of Environment Agency

Mark Haslam, Environment Manager summarised the involvement of the E.A

- The E.A regulates for the exploration and production of oil and gas and ensures that any operations carried out do not cause any problems.
- Procedures include the protection of ground and surface water quality, ensuring that appropriate measures are taken including waste management. E.A regulate the mining process through the permit from production to disposal. A variation to the permit would be required for continued drilling other than the 4 week exploratory programme.
- There is a risk based approach to the regulations and technical competence, site risks and activities are taken into account. Monitoring is carried out on compliance and conditions of the permit and checked at regular intervals (announced or not).
- Relevant to this application the permits required are; Planning Application, Mining Waste, Section 199 Water Resources Act and Radioactive Substances.
- N.C.C lead on the planning and amenity issues, other agencies involved are Department of Energy for Climate Change who issue the Petroleum Exploration and Development Licenses and the HSE for site safety matters. Public Health England are also consulted.
- Visual images were provided of what a drilling rig and a pump jack (nodding donkey) looks like.

6. Presentation from a Representative of the Planning Group N.C.C

Tim Turner, Senior Practitioner, N.C.C Planning Group provided information on the planning process.

- Tim re-iterated that the site has planning permission for exploratory drilling only and a separate application would be needed for long term extraction.
- Oil and gas extraction is covered under the Local Minerals Plan and is a much needed energy source for the Country with economic benefits and is supported by the Government.
- The application process was summarised
 - DECC Licence (Department of Energy and Climate Change)
 - Pre application discussions
 - Application submitted (consultation carried out)
 - Decision made in accordance with Development Plan.
 - If permission granted, then permits, HSE approval and an Independent well examination report required.
- The DECC must confirm that all requirements are in place and in context with Planning Policy, the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Practice Guidance. The Planning Practice Guidance for Onshore Gas and Oil and the Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan.
- Environmental Impact Assessments are carried out on an individual site basis, where applicable.
- The advertising and consultation carried out for the application was additional to statutory requirements. 23 notifications were sent to neighbouring properties. Planning officers have delegated powers to grant permission where there is limited objection and permission was granted in October 2014 with planning conditions.
- Visual images were provided of example drilling rigs, a section of the drill pipe, a site in full production and a site restored to its original state.

7. Cllr Kay Cutts Statement

The Chairman read out a statement from Cllr Kay Cutts as she was unable to attend the meeting.

In summary:

- *Cllr Cutts is aware of local concerns and has responded to several emails from residents.*
- *Cllr Cutts would like to thank all of the professionals for attending the meeting at short notice, including Nottinghamshire County Council who have kept her informed over the years on this application.*
- *Planning Officers have carried out their duty by advertising this application as have the applicants and she can only apologise to anyone who missed the publicity.*
- *Cllr Cutts has the best interests of Radcliffe on Trent at heart on all issues and will represent community views at County Council meetings.*

8. Question and Answer Session

Q. The Upper Saxondale Residents Association has formed an Action Group and the consultation period on the Permit Application ends 03 February 2015. Due to a delay in the electorate becoming aware of the application, (not until 14 January) can the period be extended by at least one week?

A. (MH) The Environment Manager advised that there are legal limitations, but he would enquire if this was a possibility.

Q. An online document states that the rig will be 37m in height?

A. (DM) The rig will be 18-20m in height.

Q. What mitigation in regard to Environmental Screening will be done to safe guard visual amenity?

A. (TT) There will be an acoustic barrier to address the noise, but screening will not be required as the application is for a 4 week period only. If the site is established then there will be different site requirements.

Q. Upper Saxondale residents already find it difficult to join the A52 during busy commuter times. Could the timing of vehicles going onto site be outside of busy traffic times?

A. (DM) Agreed to look at the traffic plan to avoid peak times.

Q. Noise emissions can carry significantly at night and more people are in their homes at night. This is a concern, what will the impact be?

A. (DM) Survey results showed that there will be an increase of 10 decibels over the norm from 10pm to 6am and during the daytime the noise levels will be under the current levels.

Q. If flaring off the gas is carried out, Radon doesn't burn, so will residents be breathing this in?

A. (KG) Legislation applies to certain radioactive materials and wide studies were carried out in 2002 by the National Geological Board to examine the risk and potential effects. Radon is considered a low risk activity and is therefore not covered by Environmental Permit Regulations.

Q. The noise survey maps do not include the residential areas of Upper Saxondale, I believe the levels will be increased by 30 decibels at night and not 10 as noise travels. Has monitoring been done at the side of the road only?

A. (TT) Monitoring has been done by an independent consultant at three separate sites as part of the planning process. An Environment Impact Assessment is not required due to the scale of the development.

Q. Upper Saxondale has not been mentioned in the application and is a conservation area, the application should be reconsidered?

A. (TT) Noise assessments have been carried out by an Independent Noise Engineer in compliance with British Standards. A recommendation was made at the last application that noise levels must not exceed levels to be complied with.

Q. There are indications of gaping holes in the consultation, how many different facets of risk assessments have been carried out and have they been made available to the public?

A. (MH) The permitting process is still in hand and the determination document has not been completed yet, but the information should be available before the final decision is taken.

Q. Does the Parish Council benefit in any way from the commercial drilling?

A. Cllr Gordon Moore (Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee) advised that the Parish Council has never received a penny and that if any future benefit was to be considered then a Neighbourhood Plan would need to be in place and the Borough Council to adopt the Community Infrastructure Levy. He again urged the E.A to consider an extension to the consultation deadline.

Q. Is Hutton Energy involved in fracking?

A. (DM) Not in the UK.

Q. Did the fracking activity carried out abroad start with a bore hole?

A. (DM) Yes.

Q. Would you sign a legal document to state that you will not be carrying out fracking at the Harlequin 3 site?

A. (DM) I can state that Hutton Energy will not be carrying out fracking at the Harlequin 3 site, but yes the company does participate in fracking.

Martin Culshaw – Local Resident and Semi Retired Geologist

There are economic issues to consider, on shore extraction is far cheaper than off shore and importing. It raises £4 billion pounds in tax revenue per annum, currently predicted to reduce to £2 billion. The economy and peoples livelihoods are based on fossil fuels. The local authorities are appointed to act as regulators and to endeavour to strike a balance with regard to rural areas. This well is not about fracking. Regional and global effects should be considered.

Q. There have been previous issues at Upper Saxondale where residents have claimed to have suffered from pungent smells and pollutants in the air. How will all these toxic gases be monitored and why is the gas being flared off?

A. (MH) I am not aware of any previous issues, there are no methods to collect the gas during the exploration period in which the gas may or may not be produced.

A. (DM) We are not expecting any gas, as we believe it is just an oil well but there is a whole suite of standard monitoring equipment for all toxic and non-toxic pollutants.

Q. Your business plan will be to go into full production and a lot of equipment will go on the 2 acre site if it proves to be successful. Risk Assessments should be for safety and operations as well as the environment. Flaring is notorious for having intermittent problems and it makes a lot of noise, an emergency plan should exist for the community near the site. There is the potential for clouds of gas, what measures are in place?

A. Johnathan Foster, H & S Manager for Hutton Energy advised that they are still in the early stages of planning the design and procedures with the Health and Safety Executive to comply with guidelines and that risk assessments are under development and will then be reviewed by the HSE. Off site emergency plans are required under COMAH (Control of Major Accidents Hazards) when sites are considered a significant risk. The scale of this site does not require this, however Hutton will still produce an on and off site health and safety plan.

Q. The water table with radioactive materials and the storage and disposal of this waste is a concern?

A. (JF) NORM (Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials) are all around us, in buildings and the atmosphere. The water may contain low levels and that is why the permit controls the risks and the NORM bearing water is managed safely. Disposal will be transferred off site to a permitted organisation and storage time on site will be limited.

Q. In the event of heavy rainfall, there is a chance that the polluted water will rise and make its way to the local brook and to the River Trent. Will measures be put in place for these exceptional circumstances, what if there is a leak?

A. (JF) There will be a plastic membrane which sits on the whole site, actual wellhead and a perimeter ditch to enable the water to be contained, pumped out and taken from the site. Units on site will capture effluent and an underground storage tank would store the liquid ready for off site disposal. The ditch water will be monitored and also transferred off site.

Comment from the Audience:

There is no fairness in this process, due diligence has not been taken, all risk assessments should be published prior to the end of the consultation period to enable residents to make informed comments.

Q. There is the potential of 1million barrels of oil, how long would this extraction process take?

A. (DM) A decision will be taken within one month of exploration and if it is decided to proceed with commercial exploration then new permits then applied for. The life of one well would be around 10 years (300,000 barrels per well) = 3-4 pumpjacks (nodding donkeys).

Q. The E.A report states that they would monitor Hutton Energy UK Ltd but only proactively if there is a problem. If data is collected will this be available to the public?

A. (MH) Yes, data is published within a few days to two weeks. Monitoring is carried out on a risk basis.

Q. To (DM and MH), would you be concerned if your son/daughter wanted to live in Upper Saxondale?

A. (DM and MH) no concerns as no safety risks.

Q. Why would there be no financial benefit / compensation to the community. Housing Developers are under obligation, why not this development?

A. Cllr Neil Clarke (RBC) advised that he would actively lobby for considerable financial benefit if an application was submitted for commercial drilling and this would be a transparent process.

Q. In 2007/8 a report stated that Radon effects are similar to those of smoking. Has any wildlife assessments been carried out?

A. (TT) Ecological surveys have been carried out in close proximity to the site. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England have also been consulted.

Q. The Hutton Energy website shows a map of operations all over Europe, have there been any previous issues with your activities? Why was the licence revoked in the Czech Republic?

A. (DM) Due to a Government moratorium on fracking. Hutton Energy UK Ltd is only operating in Europe.

Q. Richard Mather (Green Party) The Health and Safety Executive is not here and a lot of questions could have been answered, the minutes should be referred to them for answers. Where is the Planning Departments commitment to Climate Change?

A. (RU) That is not a question for this panel.

Q. Would the Hutton Energy communications team set up an Advisory Board with local community representatives?

A. (DM) Yes we would in liaison with the local Parish Council. It is still early days as the site was only acquired in November 2014, but this could be set up immediately and monitoring information supplied to the group.

Q. What is the likelihood that you will drill commercially?

A. (DM) 1 in 3 or would even propose 50% chance.

Q. If there is 300,000 barrels of oil capacity per well and the reservoir is 5 – 600 acres will the same permit process be applied for the 2 more wells?

A. (DM) Yes, and when Hutton Energy acquired Newton Energy there was no distinction of shale gas or other targets. The end of the exploration phase will confirm this.

ClIr Roger Upton thanked the panel and the audience for attending and the meeting ended at 8.30pm