

West Newton Community Liaison Committee
7pm on 12 May 2015
Densholme Care Farm, Great Hatfield
Notes of Meeting

Attendees:

David Montagu-Smith (Chairman, Rathlin Energy) - DM-S
Jonathan Foster (HSE Manager, Rathlin Energy) - JF
Tony Fildes (HSE, Rathlin Energy) - TF
Matt Martin (Construction Manager, Rathlin Energy) - MM
Caroline Foster (Field Manager, Rathlin Energy) - CF
Steve Croft (Seismic Programme Manager, Rathlin Energy) - SC
Norman Wilkie (Chairman of Withernwick Parish Council) - NW
Ron Jagger (Representing Burton Constable Parish Council) - RJ
Karen Parker (Representing Ellerby Parish Council) - KP
Annette Ford (Resident Representative Sproatley) - AF
Anita Howell (Resident Representative Ellerby) - AH
Don Fields (Resident Representative) - DF
Geoff North (Representing Aldbrough Parish Council) - GN

Apologies:

Tom Selkirk (Project Manager, Rathlin Energy) - TS
Deborah Stabler (Representing Burton Constable Parish Council) - DS
Anne Wood (Resident Representative Withernwick Parish) - AW
Lisa Brazier (Representing Humbleton and Flinton Parish) - LB
Jan Naylor (Resident Representative Ellerby Parish)

Members Still TBC:

Resident Representative for Aldbrough Parish
Resident Representative for Humbleton and Flinton Parish
Parish Council Representative for Sproatley

1. Welcome and Previous Minutes

DM-S opened the liaison group meeting, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. DM-S confirmed that notes of the previous meeting had been produced, circulated and posted on Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited's (Rathlin's) website. He asked if anyone had any comments about the notes. None were received and the notes were confirmed as an accurate reflection of what was discussed at the meeting on 18 February 2015. DM-S thanked community representatives for making sure that the details of the meeting were communicated to residents in their constituencies.

2. West Newton B

JF confirmed that the West Newton B application is set to be heard on 4 June 2015. He said that a number of objections had been lodged and these had been analysed as falling into two categories:

- i. Those relevant to the planning application (traffic, aquifer protection, ecology, industrialisation, etc.)
- ii. Those that are not relevant to planning

DM-S asked if there was any feedback from the community.

KP said there was no feedback from the Parish Council as such although local anti-fracking groups are still active in the area. She said that the issues surrounding seismic testing had quietened down now. She explained that some residents are still not happy with the plans, but that this could be expected. KP said that people still have stickers on their bins, and when the operations resume, the protesting will likely start again.

DM-S reminded the liaison committee that the anti-fracking protestors are demonstrating at sites where no high volume hydraulic fracturing (HVHF) within the Bowland Shale is taking place. He reminded members that West Newton B, should it be approved, stops 1,000m above the Bowland Shale – underlining the company's commitment to not undertaking HVHF.

AF said this had been brought up at the Parish Council particularly regarding traffic and the pedestrian crossing seeming to have "hit a brick wall". She said there was also concern about the possibility of Rathlin selling out to another company in the future which would then decide to 'frack'.

DM-S said that Rathlin had confirmed to local MP, Graham Stuart, that the company is happy to meet with him and East Riding of Yorkshire Council to look at options for a crossing for Sproatley following the traffic study that the company had prepared. He confirmed that Mr Stuart has also taken a keen interest in the matter.

DM-S also confirmed again that Rathlin has no plans to sell its licence.

AF said that although Rathlin says this, it doesn't cover what other companies may do in the future if the organisation does decide to sell its licence.

DM-S reiterated that Rathlin has no plans to sell its licence.

JF said that Rathlin is targeting the Permian formation and that no one else could drill in the area due to the licence. He said that the operation would be conducted safely and responsibly. He said that Rathlin's aim is to explore and produce in a way that would be largely unnoticeable to the vast majority of people.

AH said she had been to all of the residents' meetings and although she felt that Rathlin could do the job well, there was a risk something might go wrong. She felt there was political pressure for it to go ahead. The government and industry want it, but residents don't. She said that Rathlin, the industry and government were on one side of the fence and they [residents] were on the other. She said they had confidence in Rathlin, but in 15 years' time it may not be Rathlin and the new company may have different interests.

DM-S said that Rathlin would never do anything that wasn't legally consented. Rathlin couldn't address the wider issues, but could only try and be a good neighbour and not inconvenience local residents. He said that the drilling phase of the last two wells went virtually unnoticed and the company would like to be even less visible if West Newton B is approved.

RJ said it was quiet now but the peace ends when it rains and the lorries come to take the water away. CF explained how the separator and ditches worked and what was being done to reduce the need for tankering water away.

JF explained the interceptor and permitting for water disposal. He said that Rathlin had gone back to the Environment Agency with a new permit application to discharge (clean) rainwater which would avoid the need for tankers to take the water away.

RJ said the activity had moved to the other end of the woods and traffic was coming from the other direction so it was not a problem at the moment. He acknowledged that Rathlin did its best to be helpful and said that the local residents could have another operator in the area that didn't care as much as Rathlin does.

DM-S said that the whole point of the community liaison group was to talk. Rathlin has nothing to hide. However, despite assurances on HVHF within the Bowland Shale, the company was still attracting hostile opposition which was making it much more difficult to engage in meaningful discussions with local people. Rathlin didn't want protestors and extremists causing problems for local people and was doing its best to manage the challenges they present. Almost all of the disruption experienced was caused by protestors moving in and the police having to deal with them.

RJ said that as this well was not as deep, he thought the drilling would be even less noticeable. JF confirmed that this would be the case.

RJ asked about the West Newton A site. DM-S said this remains in a temporarily suspended state, that it is safe and is being monitored regularly.

RJ said Rathlin told him they weren't going to 'frack' and they hadn't. DM-S said that Rathlin had to be transparent at all times. He explained that all plans and permits clearly state what the company is allowed to do.

DF said he felt Rathlin had learned a lot of lessons from WNA and changes had been made, however, he still felt that protestors would turn up. He also said that he felt that traffic through Sproatley is the biggest issue. He said that Rathlin would need to liaise with the police to get the convoy through in smaller groups. MM said that he would explain traffic movements later on in the meeting.

JF said that the company will comply with its traffic management plan, but that if there was protestor disruption of any kind Rathlin would take instructions from Humberside Police. It was acknowledged that this would be problematic for both Rathlin and the community – something that all were keen to avoid.

DF said the protestors were coming out with information which was just not true. He felt it was better to work with the company, not against it. He had asked for a no 'fracking' commitment in the planning process, along with a berm and planting around the site and he had got most of what he asked for.

AF asked if Rathlin could offer any reassurance that fewer protestors would turn up if West Newton B was successful. She said that one of the residents' biggest fears was strangers in the village - they fear that Sproatley will be the channel and target for protestors.

DM-S said Rathlin was already talking to the police about managing protestors but at the moment there was no planning permission in place. He said that Rathlin had a legal right to go about its business. He explained that Crawberry Hill had become the focus for certain sections of the anti-fracking fraternity but other sites, where hydraulic fracturing is actually planned, now had a higher profile than a year ago and were now generating interest.

AF said she was more concerned about the rights of residents and was worried about strangers in the village. CF pointed out that it may be worth AF talking to Humberside Police about her concerns.

AF said she would wait until the application was approved and then it would be good for Simon Taylor to come into the school. DM-S confirmed that this would happen.

GN asked if a Section 106 would be put in place. He said the windfarm did it as one of their first actions. JF said it was a bit too early at the moment but it was something that could be asked for if Rathlin's operations became permanent in the future.

DM-S explained that Rathlin was still at the exploration stage and that it was entirely possible that nothing would be found. He said that Rathlin has PEDL 183 for five years and has an obligation to explore and test. He explained that after five years, Rathlin would have to relinquish half of its licence. DM-S said that after a second five years they would have to find something commercial or all of the licence would go back to the government.

He said that if anything was discovered, Rathlin would then need to apply for a production licence and this would require a full planning application, an Environmental Impact Assessment and an application for a pipeline, etc. He explained that at that stage Rathlin would have to demonstrate more formally, and in practice, how the company will become a fully integrated part of the local community. He said that if there was a commercial discovery in the next year, the plan would be to develop the project and the community involvement would increase. He said that DECC are the gatekeepers of all information relating to exploration and production.

JF pointed out that only commercially sensitive information will remain private. Everything else is available to regulators to inspect or take away and it is all public domain information.

MM then gave a presentation covering the following areas:

Planning Update:

- 4 June 2015 committee
- Pre-construction
- Mobilisation and compound
- Highway access
- Wellsite access track construction
- Wellsite construction
- Vehicle movements and traffic management plan

Pre-construction Operations:

- Geotechnical evaluations
- Archaeological trial pits/watching brief

JF pointed out that Rathlin had held back the application following an enquiry about the archaeological analysis on West Newton B. He explained that Humber Archaeology had asked for a full evaluation/geophysical evaluation of the proposed site. He confirmed that it is likely to be determined that a watching brief whilst stripping the fields and trial trenching in areas of increased interest would be required and is now being agreed with Humber Archaeology.

He said that it was agreed that it would be better to expose the soils as part of the construction process with a watching brief rather than strip and replace and then strip again as part of the construction. He said that the application was delayed pending the geophysical study.

Mobilisation:

- Build site compound

Highway access locations:

- Diagram of Pasture Lane and Crook Lane
- Access built to Highways' specification

Access track construction:

- 4m wide access track, increasing to 7m wide at passing point locations
- 6-8 weeks to construct (dependent upon archaeological findings and weather impact)
- Strip topsoil's to form bunds
- Geotextile matting with aggregate on top
- Will have road sweepers and wheel washing facilities available during construction

Wellsite construction:

- Working and non-working area
- Topsoil should be stripped to form bund approximately 3m high
- All bunds would be maintained and not left to become overgrown
- The site would be fully fenced
- 5-6 weeks to construct (dependent upon archaeological findings and weather impact)
- Minimum of two water monitoring boreholes to be constructed upon the wellsite

Topsoil strip and bunding works:

- Photos of WNA being built were shown
- Ditches and lining
- Drilling cellar construction

JF pointed out that the cellar construction and site lining was an important part of ensuring well and site integrity

AF queried inspections. She said you would have to get building inspector approval for a house but thought there was no inspection for a well.

JF pointed out that the well has to be built to specification, which will be reviewed by the Health and Safety Executive as part of the Borehole Sites and Operations Regulations and the Environment Agency as part of the environmental permit application.

DM-S said it would jeopardise the whole project if the well was not signed off.

AF asked who monitors and supplies data to the Environment Agency.

JF said Rathlin did. He explained that other people are also drilling into the aquifer. He explained that Rathlin has five sets of casings to protect it. He said that the regulatory set up is based on goal setting and best industry practice. He explained that more than 2,000 wells have been safely drilled onshore in the UK and that out of these 2,000 wells, only one has been reported as having an integrity issue, which was subsequently remediated. JF said that the independent well inspector quality controls work along with the Environment Agency and Health and Safety Executive.

DM-S said all safety operations were based around Rathlin's Safety Management System. He said that he is at the top of this in terms of responsibility and so was responsible for ensuring the integrity of all safety mechanisms.

JF said that when the regulators arrive on the site, they undertake compliance assessments. Each entry is recorded on a Compliance Assessment Report (CAR) form as a 'condition(s) breached', however, this could be for something as simple as a form used by the team on site not being in the Rathlin format.

AF asked where the Hull Daily Mail stories about breaches came from.

DM-S said that the environmental permits had never been needed before and Rathlin was the first company to go through this new process. He explained that, as such, everyone was still feeling their way and that Rathlin was under intense scrutiny. He said that whilst to the outside world it may seem worrying, the reality is that most of the issues raised were actually quite minor. He said that some individuals had taken their interpretation of the breaches to the media who in turn had covered the story. He said that he hoped that Rathlin's message on this issue had been clear and reassuring when responding to enquiries.

CF confirmed that none of the issues raised had any scope for any environmental impact.

DM-S said that the Environment Agency had not raised any objections on the plans for West Newton B.

JF mentioned that Rathlin would be applying for a permit for discharging clean rain water from the site. However, there would be no discharging during operations to avoid any risk of spillage or leakage.

MM then took the community liaison group through the traffic management plan showing the types of vehicles that residents can expect to see, graphs of the proposed vehicle activity and comparisons against current vehicular movements. It is estimated that Rathlin's temporary operations will contribute an extra 1.5-2% increase in overall traffic. Resident representatives said that they thought the numbers would be significantly higher and that they were pleased and relieved that this would not be the case.

Resident representatives pointed out that when the windfarm was being built, that construction vehicles were not allowed to come through certain villages and if they did, they were thrown off site.

MM confirmed that vehicles would only use authorised routes and that they will have a tracking device fitted so their movements would be known.

DM-S said that at Crawberry Hill two lorries broke the rule about one vehicle leaving the site at a time and that they were banned from doing any more work for Rathlin.

AF asked if Rathlin would be able to get a pedestrian crossing in the village for children.

JF said that this had been looked at but the independent engineers agreed with the council regarding the traffic volumes being too low. He said that Rathlin has looked at different crossings and that discussions are taking place with Graham Stuart MP.

DM-S said that Mr Stuart had written to Rathlin asking for the background on the issue and that the company had supplied this. He said that once planning was approved, it may be possible to review the matter.

JF said that for a brief period, the traffic will increase in Sproatley but Rathlin would like to talk to residents about how the company intends to mitigate this. He confirmed that there would be no lorry movements during school hours or when there were events in the village.

JF said that Rathlin had built sites with smaller access roads and would do everything necessary to minimise the impact of its ongoing work. He said the team will also monitor performance to build solid working practices and trust, particularly with new contractors.

DM-S pointed out that Rathlin had tried to be flexible at West Newton A and RJ agreed that this was the case, but wherever the vehicles come from, there would be additional traffic.

JF pointed out that the Aldbrough gas storage project had much higher levels of traffic involved and the vehicles went through Sproatley.

DM-S said that at previous community liaison groups had previously given detailed advanced information about what was going to happen, but due to protestors, it would be difficult to give this level of information in the future and he said this was a real regret.

JF said that at Crawberry Hill, the water monitoring results had been shared. Resident representatives asked whether this would be the case with West Newton B. JF said this would be possible. He said that Rathlin would also be monitoring air quality and noise levels and these results could be shared with the group.

3. Any Other Business

DM-S asked resident representatives if there was any other business to discuss. No further items were raised.

DM-S summarised by saying that if the planning application was approved, Rathlin would like to meet with the liaison group more frequently to share information and results and to develop a more interactive relationship.

4. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

DM-S suggested that the next meeting should be held after the West Newton B application had been determined by East Riding of Yorkshire Council on 04 June 2015. He said that if the application was successful, Rathlin would begin to prepare a project delivery timeline. It was agreed that this would be the best and most appropriate time to meet again.

DM-S said that Simon Taylor would contact resident representatives in due course to make any arrangements.

DM-S thanked resident representatives for their proactive input and reminded them that Rathlin intended to be a good neighbour at all times.

He also said that the company is accessible 24-hours a day, seven days a week and urged anyone with any concerns to get in touch.

He said that further updates are available via Rathlin's website: www.rathlin-energy.co.uk and reminded resident representatives about the 24-hour emergency number: 0800 1959154.

He thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 20.50.