

## **West Newton Community Liaison Committee**

**7pm on 02 December 2021**

**Densholme Care Farm, Great Hatfield**

### **Notes of Meeting**

#### **Attendees**

Tom Selkirk (Project Manager, Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited) - TS (via videolink)  
Caroline Foster (Operations Engineer, Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited) - CF  
Nick Mace (Field Development Manager, Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited) - NM  
Harry Clark (Resident Representative, Ellerby) - HC  
Anita Howell (Representing Ellerby Parish Council) - AH  
Annette Ford (Resident Representative, Sproatley) - AF  
Geoff North (Representing Aldborough Parish Council) - GN  
Don Fields (Resident Representative, Sproatley) - DF  
Graham Hutchcroft (Marton resident attending on behalf of Ron Jagger) - GH  
Simon Taylor (Communications, Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited) - ST

#### **Apologies received**

Stephen Croft (Site Technician and Local Liaison, Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited) - SC  
Graham Stuart MP (Member of Parliament for Beverley and Holderness) - GS  
Cllr Jacob Birch (Ward Councillor for Mid Holderness) - JB  
Ron Jagger (Representing Burton Constable Parish Council) - RJ  
Vanessa Nolan (Resident Representative, Humbleton) - VN  
Lisa Brazier (Representing Humbleton Parish Council) - LB  
Sarah Blanchard (Resident Representative, Aldbrough) - SB

#### **1. Welcome**

CF opened the liaison group meeting, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. The notes from the site visit and discussion on 09 September 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate reflection of the conversations at that time. As GH was new to the meeting, everyone briefly introduced themselves.

CF said that, following East Riding of Yorkshire Council's determination on 30 September 2021, this meeting was to give an update about Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited's (Rathlin) ongoing plans for the West Newton A (WNA) production development and the West Newton B (WNB) wellsite.

#### **2. Operations Update**

CF gave a brief operations update detailing that well testing operations ceased at the WNA wellsite and the equipment was demobilised in early November. She reiterated the previous Rathlin update that hydrocarbon were found at both sites but neither well was able to flow commercial volumes of oil or gas. A small sample of WNA-2 oil was shown. No questions were raised on the completed operations.

### **3. West Newton A planning update**

CF explained that some councillors on East Riding of Yorkshire Council's planning committee raised concerns with the scale of the company's WNA application during the 30 September 2021 meeting. Despite the officers' recommendation for approval, the application was refused, with the scale of the development being an important factor in the committee's final determination.

She said that while Rathlin continues to receive legal advice regarding an appeal of the decision, re-submitting a revised application, based on councillor and resident feedback, is a viable option. Having received the decision document explaining the reasons for refusal, CF said that Rathlin is now working on a revised application for the proposed development, in line with the comments made by council representatives and local residents.

She explained that Rathlin has taken on board concerns raised regarding the scale of the development, and other points made by the local community. She said that the company intended to submit a new application, addressing the scale of the development by reducing the site footprint by around 25 per cent and reducing the number of wells to be drilled. She explained that the revised application will include four new wells as opposed to six new wells, in the previous application, with the primary target being the more promising Kirkham Abbey reservoir.

CF said that an Environmental Impact screening request has already been submitted and that the team is planning to lodge a new application before the end of 2021.

HC asked when the application was likely to go before the planning committee. CF said that she expected it to be in the first half of 2022. HC then asked if Rathlin would be restoring the WNA in view of the fact that the current planning application expired on 19 November 2021. NM said that Rathlin had six months to appeal the decision and that company representatives are proactively in touch with East Riding of Yorkshire Council's planning enforcement team about this matter. CF said that in the meantime, the site and wells continued to be maintained to be kept in a safe and sound manner as a competent operator.

GH asked whether the roads, which were now reopened, would close again if work was approved and restarted. He said that this is an important issue for local people who use them for general access and for social convenience. CF said that Rathlin does not have the authority and necessary powers to close roads. She stressed that Rathlin does not want to see any roads closed. She said that the local authority is responsible for the granting of road closures often in conjunction with Humberside Police which include discussions with both parties prior to enacting any road closures. CF said the main problem, historically, had been the health and safety of a small number of people, often from outside the area, intent on causing disruption and creating safety concerns with vehicles entering and leaving the site [climbing on top, slow walking in front, gluing/tying themselves to vehicles and infrastructure, etc.].

ST asked the local liaison group if any of the members had ever engaged with the protestors, some of whom still frequent the site occasionally, to ask them to refrain from causing these problems – recognising the cause (unsafe protesting) and the effect (road closures). The group said that they understood this point before discussing the matter for a short period.

The general consensus was that the local community would prefer to have the roads open and that the number of 'external' protestors visiting the site was now relatively small. Despite this, they recognised that people needed to be kept safe from the risk of injury. There was no conclusion on this matter.

NM went on to explain that Rathlin will also be providing a revised landscape and planting proposal to enhance the screening of the site and will examine more extensively the potential for passing places along Pasture Lane and other traffic management proposals. He said that with a revised application Rathlin will provide additional information to the community liaison group and local stakeholders/residents.

CF explained that because the proposed planning application is of smaller scope than previously assessed, the environmental assessments required to accompany the planning application should only need minor amendments which will allow Rathlin to submit the revised application by the end of 2021. She clarified that Rathlin had submitted an application to vary the Environment Agency (EA) permits for the West Newton A site in July this year to allow for the production of hydrocarbons at the wellsite.

CF explained that these have now been 'duly made' and that Rathlin had been made aware that the EA is planning to carry out public consultation on the application. She said that the Environment Agency permitting regime and the Minerals Planning Authority planning determination processes are independent of one another but both EA permits and planning permission need to be granted prior to carrying out any activities.

ST said that the online information for the revised application would be updated to include the revised scope. He said that engagement rates at the last application were much greater than before and that this was reflected by a higher number of more varied comments received by the planning authority ahead of the 30 September 2021 meeting. ST also said that keeping the information online seemed sensible in light of ongoing concerns with coronavirus and the new Omicron variant. He said that Rathlin would write to all residents once again offering to advise them of the new application as well as providing support over the telephone and via Teams/Zoom where requested (as with the last application).

GH asked if a smaller application would result in less vehicle movements. TS said that the overall traffic movements would be reduced due to two fewer wells being drilled and a smaller site to construct but that at its peak during the production phase 10 tankers a day would still be the proposed scenario.

CF explained that assessments had been carried out on the maximum number of vehicles that maybe seen in one day, and that it is unlikely that it would be common to see these maximum numbers throughout the phases.

TS explained that during the production phase, as the wells deplete the vehicle movements would decrease, but that 10 is the expected level during production phase at peak production.

GH asked at what point a pipeline would be considered. NM said that there are a number of factors that would need to be taken into consideration – not least actual production rates and volumes. He said that Rathlin hoped that the prospect would support the installation of a pipeline, but that this would not become clear until more appraisal work is completed and production history established. He also explained that other considerations would be the direction of a pipeline and where it would connect into.

NM reassured community liaison group members that this is something that Rathlin is studying carefully. DF clarified that if gas was the primary source that this would need to be piped away. NM confirmed that this would be the case.

CF said that ST would circulate information on the application in the usual way as and when it became available so that community liaison group members (and parish councils/ward members) can cascade factual information out via their usual community communication channels.

#### **4. West Newton B update**

CF said that the planning permission for West Newton B (WNB) has a condition that requires operations to be completed by April 2022. She said that despite Rathlin's continued operational efforts since site construction was initiated, it is unlikely that the originally proposed work scope will be finished before the expiration date.

She said that the company would be applying to East Riding of Yorkshire Council to vary this condition and that the team aims to submit this application by the end of the year so that the WNA and WNB applications can run along the same timeline.

CF said that the original development was approved to allow for two wells to be drilled and tested, and after the encouraging results from the West Newton B1z well, as well as the A site wells, Rathlin is requesting further time to drill and test the second well at the site. She said that the application will not make any changes to the proposed development activity, just to extend the time allowed.

#### **5. Any Other Business**

GH asked what was happening with the West Newton C and West Newton D applications. CF said that these were not now being progressed.

#### **6. Next Meeting**

TS proposed that the next meeting take place in February 2022 once the planning application has been submitted, enabling community liaison group members to discuss the matters in more detail. He said that ST would be in touch nearer the time.

TS said that any further updates will be available via Rathlin's website at:

[www.rathlin-energy.co.uk](http://www.rathlin-energy.co.uk)

#### **Standing note:**

Emergency calls should be directed Rathlin's 24-hour freephone number: 0800 1959154.