



FFBRA NEWSLETTER NUMBER ONE

Dated: Saturday 12 October 2013

The Election of officers / members of the committee of FFBRA will take place late October or early November 2013. In the meantime I will send out news bulletins to all the members of FFBRA for whom I have an email address. An FFBRA Newsletter Editor will be appointed in due course and this will improve our communications and also enable us to make greater use of our website www.frackfreebalcombe.co.uk

Balcombe Parish Council (BPC) organised a "Meet the Environment Agency" on 9 October 2013 for which availability of tickets fell short of demand, and so I know many of you were not able to get tickets. A video recording of the event has been made but we have not yet received a copy of it from BPC. In the mean time I have asked as many people as possible to send me details of the Questions and Answers session. These have been collated and are below. Once the recording is received, we will publish an accurate transcript of the Q&A Event on our website.

Please let me know, if you think similar events would be worthwhile with, for example WSCC or our MP, Francis Maude.

At least 30 questions were asked. Below are some of them. if you asked a question and it is not listed below or fully reported, please could you email me on members@frackbalcombe.co.uk with details.

There will be a FFBRA Coffee Meeting and Exhibition in Bramble Hall on 26 October 2013 11.00 am to 1.00 pm. All (members and non-members) are welcome. The specialist topic of the meeting will be related to question 7 below, Geology of the High Weald.

Questions from Balcombe Residents and Answers from the Environment Agency – 9 October St Mary's Church, Balcombe

1. EA TO REDUCE TIME FOR PROCESSING PERMITS TO TWO WEEKS?
2. NATIONAL TRUST, RSPB, ANGLING TRUST ETC OPPOSE FRACKING

3. TESTING OF DRILLING MUD
4. NOISE
5. DEVASTATION OF SUSSEX COUNTRYSIDE
6. NO LONG TERM HEALTH STUDIES
7. HIGH WEALD GEOLOGY UNSUITABLE FOR FRACKING
8. STORAGE OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE ON SITE
9. FLARING OR VENTING?
10. EROSION OF DEMOCRACY
11. ARE WE GUINEA PIGS?
12. EA REFUSES TO ASSESS PERCEIVED RISKS AND FEAR
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14. BALCOMBE GREEN STREAM POLLUTION INCIDENT
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16. PAPERWORK OR HANDS ON WORK
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19. IS THE EA JUST RUBBER STAMPING GOVERNMENT POLICY?
20. FRACKING BY STEALTH
21. AFTER START OF DRILLING AIR QUALITY MONITOR ALARM RED
22. HEALTH PROBLEMS FROM POLLUTION
23. WATER USE
24. WHERE DID THE TRUCKS GO?
25. DEPLETED URANIUM

1. QUESTION: EA TO REDUCE TIME FOR PROCESSING PERMITS TO TWO WEEKS?

To date the EA has a 3 to 4 month lead time for processing permits. We are told that your target is to reduce this to 2 weeks by February 2014. What will be the impact of this?

ANSWER:

He was unaware of this but said they do try to process as quickly as possible so not to delay businesses, he denies any pressure from government just that the agency tries to be efficient. In other words it's ok for a building permit to take 3 months but radioactive waste clearly quicker process!!! I commented on his slide with what appears to be a comprehensive process and asked how on earth all of that could be achieved in 2 weeks. I said that I couldn't understand given they don't yet know the details of the new planning application how they can allow them to keep those permits and said I felt they should have to be applied for again, he said that they would consider the new application and make sure it hasn't changed significantly to warrant new permits. I feel this was lip service.

2. QUESTION: NATIONAL TRUST, RSPB, ANGLING TRUST ETC OPPOSE FRACKING

The National Trust, the RSPB, the Angling Trust, the Woodland Trust and Lord Cowdray, one of the greatest landowners in Sussex, are all opposed to

fracking. These are all trusted guardians of our environment. Can you comment on this please?

ANSWER: Something very waffly about the National Trust having other issues with energy supplies, something like that. it was very quickly dismissed, and they didn't mention any of the other organisations.

3. QUESTION: TESTING OF DRILLING MUD

Has the EA tested drilling mud or any extracted waste and what has been found?

ANSWER: I don't know. I'll have to check and get back to you' (useful answer!).

4. QUESTION: NOISE

After 5 weeks of noise from the drilling rig which constantly exceeded the accepted sound levels, we would like to thank the Environment Agency for attending site on the 7th September and helping to put a stop to the breach of planning.

However, from the report subsequently provided by Cuadrilla it is apparent that they have manipulated the recorded sound data and deviated away from BS 4142:1997 which is the recognised standard used in the UK to assess noise from drilling rigs. Therefore, it is apparent that we can not rely upon WSCC to enforce any of the planning conditions that impact upon the welfare and amenity of the residents or can we rely upon Cuadrilla to self regulate as they have sugar coated the facts regarding noise.

Can you run through for the benefit of those here what happened with the noise, how you became involved and a response regarding the incorrect presentation of the results by Cuadrilla.

ANSWER: They admit that they did not get it right regarding noise and there were a lot of mistakes to learn from including who was responsible for the enforcement. The EA then stated that they only received two complaints and it was the second that instigated the response and arrival on site on the 7th September to force Cuadrilla to change their working methods.

COMMENT: Made later by the resident who asked the question. Whilst they may only have received two complaints they were in constant dialogue with MSCC and WSCC (who received many complaints about the noise) during the drilling operations and were well aware of the noise problem.

5. QUESTION: DEVASTATION OF SUSSEX COUNTRYSIDE

In Sussex, if this goes ahead, there will be roughly 1,000 well pads and each well pad will take out about 10 acres when you take into account the well, the compressor and the roads. This will take out a huge area of farmland and trees. A J Lucas, the Australian part owners of Cuadrilla, have boasted that they have 57,000 acres of Sussex countryside for exploratory. There is also

iGAS, Celtique and Magellan with drilling licenses? Why are you allowing this devastation to go ahead? And how will you monitor such a large area?

ANSWER: I think the man from DECC answered this one – if anyone took notes please email them member@frackfreebalcombe.co.uk.

6. QUESTION: NO LONG TERM HEALTH STUDIES

I quoted from a peer reviewed health research paper by Bamberger and Oswald of Cornell University

‘Communities living near hydrocarbon gas drilling operations have become de facto laboratories for the study of environmental toxicology. The close proximity of these operations to small communities has created a variety of potential hazards to humans, companion animals, livestock and wildlife. Documentation of cases in six states strongly implicates exposure to gas drilling operations in serious health effects on humans, companion animals, livestock, horses, and wildlife.’

I also quoted the conclusion of an independent health study commissioned by a GP in Australia in TARA region of Australia, McCarron report 2013 3) Health impact assessments must be an integral part of any and every unconventional gas development. No new permit should be issued without one, and health impact assessments should be carried out for every development already in place. ’

I stated that I didn’t want my children to be guinea pigs as nobody knows the long term health impact of living close to these operations. (Indeed legislation is being passed in Australia and America to limit the proximity of these wells to residents.) I asked “Have you considered the above studies and where is the precautionary principal here?’ They did not answer my question.

Afterwards I spoke to three of them and quoted Theo Colborn’s peer reviewed research assessing air quality that raises serious health concerns about living in close proximity to drilling and fracking operations . None of them had heard of this research. Simon Deacon told me that in fact health issues probably weren’t in their remit, but this was down to the DECC. I obviously laughed at this and explained the kind of monosyllabic answers we get from them. Also expressed how ridiculous it would seem that an entity concerned with energy security should be looking after our health. I also suggested that as they are concerned with the environment, noise and the emotional well-being of residents then this could not be separated from our health. I also described to him some of the reasons we are so concerned, i.e I asked the same questions about flaring to the EA and the DECC, ‘How many wells have been flared in Sussex?’ The EA answered ‘all production sites’ the DECC answered ‘none’. This illustrated just one of the reasons we feel we cannot trust anyone! Simon told me he thought it was one, maybe 2 (Storrington and or Singleton).

As far as the research papers go he told me he would look into it and let me know who I should contact if not them. I suggested it was his responsibility to pass those concerns on to the relevant bodies. I wait with bated breath!

7. QUESTION: HIGH WEALD GEOLOGY UNSUITABLE FOR FRACKING

It is true that the Fault lines will allow gases to vent through from the drilling to the surface?

ANSWER: EA are waiting for Cuadrilla to provide a 'Frack Path' that maps the fault lines and fracking risks associated with fugitive gases rising

ADDITIONAL COMMENT FROM ANOTHER RESIDENT:

Fault lines in the whole of Sussex are my biggest concern because even if they don't frack us, it's only a matter of time before they frack somewhere else in the Weald, thus potentially contaminating all of our Sussex water and Sussex air. Also I thought the claim that water under Balcombe is not potable to be facile. With all the new house building that's about to occur, we may need technological fixes to develop new ways of extracting and treating water in the future.

8 QUESTION: STORAGE OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE ON SITE

The radioactive waste permit states the waste can be stored for three months on site. What is the reason for this long length of time? As it seems to be another potential risk.

ANSWER: Peter the radioactive man (not literally)! Can't remember his surname said it was to do with the correct management and that three months allowed Cuadrilla time to do this. I would like clarification to this answer as it was very rushed as it was right at the end. I also had a question another question about Mr Mace, Cuadrilla's appointed environmental and sustainability manager. It appears from clarification from Simon at Cuadrilla that Mr Mace has no specific training to NORM. The EA have assigned him a RPA (Radiation Protection Adviser). Can we have the details of this RPA ?as Cuadrilla could not confirm this. How can we be confident in the qualifications of the staff of Cuadrilla. Are the EA ensuring the qualifications are adequate to ensure our safety and the safety of our children and the environment?

9 QUESTION: FLARING OR VENTING?

Have they been flaring or venting at Lower Stumble?

ANSWER

No

10. QUESTION: EROSION OF DEMOCRACY

On the wall behind me are the names of Balcombe residents who died in the Second World War, fighting to protect British Democracy. The present government is eroding that democracy. They want to shorten the period of consultation for planning applications, and are trying to make it legal to drill and explore under someone's property without asking permission beforehand. Until you, the EA, were forced to by pressure from Friends of the Earth and the Balcombe community, you ignored the obligation for Cuadrilla to apply for permits for mining waster and the handling or radioactive materials. Now you

are relying on Cuadrilla to self-regulate, to inform you when things go wrong – something they certainly failed to do in Lancashire.

What confidence can Balcombe residents have that, in future, applications to drill and, next time, to frack, the EA will not show the same bias towards the oil and gas industry, and will not aid the government's stated desire to fill the countryside with oil – and gas- wells?

ANSWER: I got a waffly answer from Tony from Head Office, saying that they did not dictate policy. It was such a waffly answer that Geoff Lean actually asked him to answer the question

11. QUESTION: ARE WE GUINEA PIGS?

We seem to be playing an uncertain role in a mystery story. Are we just the victims of Cuadrilla's drilling operations or are we also acting as guinea-pigs? The geology is not great for unconventional drilling and more than 80% of the village don't want Cuadrilla here; so why did they come at all? After only a few weeks of drilling Cuadrilla announces that oil production from the village is unlikely because, they say, the exploration site is too near village houses and our roads can't carry the lorry traffic needed. Did some astounding foolishness obscure these considerations from the company before drilling started? So I have to ask: is drilling in Balcombe the equivalent of the miner's canary in coal mining? You send the bird down with the miner and if it dies the miner tries to get out quickly. Is this community the canary or test case helping the Environment Agency to streamline its procedures? This is what Balcombe Parish Council's minutes have suggested.

ANSWER: from Chris Grayling
Definitely not that.

Follow-up question after the meeting (again with Chris Grayling).

Let me ask my question another way. The Agency will have learned lessons from the Balcombe drilling. Are you now more likely and able to speed up procedures for assessing permit applications as Government wants; or, having told us you now have much work to do to respond to Balcombe's concerns will you try to slow down the permit process so that all factors, including community stress, are considered more thoroughly?

FOLLOW-UP ANSWER: No, the second will not be possible because we must relate costs to benefits.

12 QUESTION: EA REFUSES TO ASSESS PERCEIVED RISKS AND FEAR Question after the meeting to Chris Grayling:

This meeting has been called to give assurance that all is being done to safeguard us from environmental risk. But how can the Agency give any such assurances if it refuses to evaluate how residents perceive risks and respond to stress. In fact, the Agency's rationale for its permit for mining waste

brushes aside public stress and perceptions of risk. Yet the public is anxious over the long-term ill-health consequences for their families and knows that freak major calamities do happen. At Fukushima in Japan a totally unexpected tsunami has created a nuclear mess and lethal health hazards which have no easy or quick solution. What hazards could a Cuadrilla freak lorry accident cause? Why is there no assessment of perceived risks and fear such as those carried out for nuclear installations?

ANSWER: We don't deal with traffic related incidents and don't include psychological factors in our remit.

13 QUESTION: HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES OXIRANE AND ANTIMONY TRIOXIDE

The Hydro Geological report from the EA published after drilling had started stated that two substances were identified as hazardous and you recommended these not to be used. These were oxirane (ethylene oxide) and antimony tri-oxide. Where they used? Did the EA monitor their use? If you did not, who did and how do we know how much was used?

My question was:

In the EA FAQs you stated that the drilling mud additives were classified as non-hazardous. In the EA's hydro-geological assessment, published after the mining waste permit was granted you identified two substances as hazardous and you recommended to quote "these are not used" These substances were oxirane and antimony trioxide.

My question were they used? And most importantly how did the EA monitor their use - or was it another case of Cuadrilla's sub contractor being allowed to regulate themselves?

ANSWER:

No legal definition of hazardous. Antimony trioxide not used, small amounts remain in the well, low risk - no answer to the oxyrane or the monitoring. However Simon admitted immediately I went up to him he had not answered the question.

14. QUESTION: BALCOMBE GREEN STREAM POLLUTION INCIDENT

Last Monday in the early afternoon, numerous residents reported that the length of a gill stream next to the drilling site was flowing bright fluorescent green. The EA didn't visit until it was dark and then went to the wrong stream. The EA returned the following day at around midday, were guided to the correct stream and took samples. It is believed to be green harmless green tracer dye,- and having ruled out the water companies and Railtrack, it is possibly a hoax, but investigations of the source I understand are ongoing. So the Environment agency, knowing of Cuadrilla's recent activities, knowing from several x A4 sheets listing many added hazardous chemicals to the mining waste permit needed for the drilling muds, and that this stream was only 75 yards from the well pad ,was this utter lack of urgency or any subsequent concrete information on the part of the EA, an example of your

unpublished, Pollution Incident Plan, that we can all expect to protect us in the event of a toxic spill or accident?

ANSWER:

Does anyone have notes of his answer?

15 QUESTION: BLOW OUTS AND SITE SPECIFIC EMERGENCY PLAN

Given that blow outs causing toxic and radio active plumes have already happened in the US Fracking Fields the latest I am aware of in Lavaca County in Texas on the 29th August, and given that 8 wells per square mile will be needed here, if it happens in Balcombe what is the site specific emergency plan for Balcombe?

ANSWER: Their reply was that yes Cuadrilla would have a plan but they did not know what it was and would have to get back to us regarding this.

16 QUESTION: PAPERWORK OR HANDS OR WORK

My question was what % of the EA's team time was spent on paper work versus hands on work.

ANSWER:

Chris tried to turn this into what % was in the office and what out of the office. Very waffly answer (to be fair so was the question).

I spoke to Paul Batty afterwards and he admitted that they less than 5% of their time is spent doing any hands on testing, they are just doing paper work and relying on Cuadrilla to self regulate.

17. QUESTION: HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

"This exploratory study was designed to assess air quality in a rural western Colorado area where residences and gas wells co-exist. Sampling was conducted before, during, and after drilling and hydraulic fracturing of a new natural gas well pad. Weekly air sampling for 1 year revealed that the number of non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHCs) and their concentrations were highest during the initial drilling phase and did not increase during hydraulic fracturing in this closed-loop system. Methylene Chloride, a toxic solvent not reported in products used in drilling or hydraulic fracturing, was detected 73% of the time; several times in high concentrations. A literature search of the health effects of the NMHCs revealed that many had multiple health effects, including 30 that affect the endocrine system, which is susceptible to chemical impacts at very low concentrations, far less than government safety standards. Selected polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) were at concentrations greater than those at which prenatally exposed children in urban studies had lower developmental and IQ scores. The human and environmental health impacts of the NMHCs, which are ozone precursors, should be examined further given that the natural gas industry is now operating in close proximity to human residences and public"

I would also like to quote Bamberger and Oswald (Cornell University)
"Animals, especially livestock, are sensitive to the contaminants released into the environment by drilling and by its cumulative impacts. Documentation of cases in six states strongly implicates exposure to gas drilling operations in serious health effects on humans, companion animals, livestock, horses, and wildlife. Without complete studies, given the many apparent adverse impacts on human and animal health, a ban on shale gas drilling is essential for the protection of public health"

I would also like to quote my worrying answer to questions about flaring received by yourselves: "When determining the mining waste permit we were satisfied that the combustion of natural gas would not result in pollution or harm to human health. In determining the permit we consulted public health England and our own air quality experts can draw on a wealth of experience related to landfill gas flare emissions."

Have you considered the above studies?

Have you considered the fact that this drilling goes extremely deep into the ground and will be a radioactive combination of gases? As the studies above suggest, there will be many more harmful substances released than just natural gas. Not I believe the same as on waste dumps?

ANSWER: Still waiting for notes on this

18 QUESTION WILL LONG TERM DAMAGE BE PAID FOR BY DRILLING COMPANIES?

What will the EA do to ensure something that goes wrong is cleared up fully? Will you be ensuring the companies have £ multi million long term bonds secured at banks or long term insurance policies that cover disasters for the decades that come after exploration as well?

ANSWER: We can fine companies responsible.

Not a good answer (or pointed enough question, so I will follow up more precisely in writing). They did not indicate how much they could fine companies or what would they do if a company could not pay, or what to do to make sure a company would be able to pay (e.g. the insurance policies and bank bonds

19 QUESTION: ARE THE EA JUST RUBBER STAMPING GOVERNMENT POLICY?

On what data (from Balcombe) is the Environment Agency evaluating the [national] acceptability of this industry, and how are you representing your findings to the relevant ministers?' and 'Are you just rubber stamping? Do you just deal with the permission aspect of it? How are you processing the findings? Are you then assessing, evaluating that information and feeding it back to decision makers?'

ANSWER: included 'During the drilling we have gathered various bits of environmental monitoring data etc to assess processes as they have gone on'. 'The primary purpose for us is to ensure that Cuadrilla haven't caused environmental harm. If the data show some intelligence of a problem with Cuadrilla's activity then that information would flow back to our policy guys who would have conversations at the necessary level in our organisation and in government. So it would show in policy if Cuadrilla's specific activity here in Balcombe was classed as a problem.' To me Chris Wick has expressed the ideal of the organisation here. Also, they claim to be technical experts and are party to information, both social and scientific, so they should be in a position to lobby government, but according to the picture he paints, they have all the powers of a school prefect.

20. QUESTION: FRACKING BY STEALTH

You say that you can only deal with applications that are in front of you, which I can understand, and try to distance tonight's proceedings from fracking. I've heard if fracking does go ahead it will have 1,000 well pads in Sussex. Each of those well pads is going to take approximately 10 acres of land when you take into consideration the compressors, the wells themselves and the roads. We know that AJ Lucas, the parent or part parent of Cuadrilla, have got licences to drill 57,000 acres in Sussex. And we also know that IGas, Celtique and another company have drilling licences. Are we going to get fracking by stealth? Are you going to deal with each of these applications by stealth? So you ultimately without the EIA so we ultimately get 1,000 well pads because you are dealing with each one via stealth? Secondly, I need to take you to task on one issue. You said it was you, EA, that identified your requirement for the mineral waste permit. It wasn't you. You were caught out. It was actually Friends of the Earth. So if you are standing up there in my opinion, I said in my opinion, lying, how can we have confidence in you in respect of other matters?

ANSWER:

EA: I don't think there's any chance of fracking by stealth. I think that is clear. And it's not going to happen, if it does happen, overnight. We are still very much in the very early stages of exploration in other parts of the country. [...] I think it's pretty clear now that if a company comes forward with a proposal for hydraulic fracturing, that the local Minerals Planning Authority will ask for an Environmental Impact Assessment to be undertaken [...] Also later this year, the Department for Energy and Climate Change will be looking at the next round of licensing, and the [...] without permits from the Environment Agency, so there is no chance whatever of fracking by stealth.

I think that you said earlier that we had been caught with our trousers down. I'm disagreeing with that assessment. We were in discussion as described with Cuadrilla in relation to what plans it had for activity at the Balcombe site, and we were considering whether or not permits were needed. And actually that was happening in parallel to my team developing our national approach to oil and gas exploration. And we did [...] and obviously we were right to make sure we did what we should do, but we were in the process of reaching our decision on whether or not permits were required, and permits were

required, and we didn't allow activities on the ground without those permits in place as necessary.

BALCOMBE RESIDENT INTERRUPTED EA RESPONSE Excuse me. That's not actually how I understand it happened. Friends of the Earth made legal representation to make you make them take that permit out. So getting up there and say you have your permits under control and trying to placate us that everything is ok, that you are on top of everything, isn't serving the right purpose. You're evidently not on top of it.

CHAIRMAN: You have made your point.

21. QUESTION: AFTER DRILLING THE HOME AIR QUALITY MONITOR WENT RED Has anyone a note about this?

22. QUESTION: HEALTH PROBLEMS FROM POLLUTION
Has anyone a note about this?

23 QUESTION: WATER USE / SUSSEX WATER SHORTAGE
Has anyone a note about this?

24 QUESTION: DISPOSAL OF WASTE?
Where have the trucks gone to and what was in them? Where has Cuadrilla disposed of the drilling muds? Was it in the tankers? Or did they have a slurry pit they pumped to.

ANSWER: Has anyone a note about this?

25 QUESTION: DEPLETED URANIUM
Has anyone a note about this?

Remember any more from the meeting? You can help us fill in the gaps by emailing members@frackfreebalcombe.co.uk.