

FFBRA NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWO

Dated 23 October 2013

FUTURE EVENTS In BALCOMBE

FFBRA Coffee Morning and Exhibition.

Saturday 26 October 11.00 am to 1.00 pm. Bramble Hall.

Information and displays.

Special topic: Geology of the High Weald.

Child friendly. Creche available. ALL welcome.

FFBRA Coffee Morning and Exhibition.

Saturday 2 November 11.00 am to 1.00 pm Bramble Hall.

Information and displays.

Special topics: Regulation, Planning Permission. Tips and Tricks.

Child friendly. Creche available. ALL welcome

The Election for Officers / Members of the Committee of FFBRA

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.

A FFBRA Newsletter Editor will be appointed in due course and improve our communications and make greater use of our website.

www.frackfreebalcombe.co.uk

Beyond BALCOMBE

Worthing Against Fracking: Friday 25 October 7.00 pm to 9.30 pm.

Public meeting, Sidney Walter Centre , Sussex Road, Worthing. BN11 1DS.

Talk by Ian R Crane. "Petition to WSCC to keep oil and gas drilling companies out of the South Downs." With Alan Rice (West Sussex County Councillor), MEP, Keith Taylor and representatives from the local fire brigade.

Concerned Citizens Against Fracking: Wednesday 30 October 7.00pm.

Public meeting: All Saints Parish Hall, Eaton Road, Hove BN33Q

Talk by Ian R Crane.

Suggested donation. £5

Frack Free Fernhurst: Friday 1 November 8pm to 9.30 pm

Public Meeting at Fernhurst Village Hall, Fernhurst

Frack Free Fernhurst will be presenting an update to the village.

News and Information for our Members FFBRA Committee Members

Our constitution allows us to have nine committee members and our goal is to have a full committee as soon as possible.

FFBRA Committee Members will be responsible on behalf of all FFBRA members for what the Residents' Association does and on what it spends its funds. In order to fairly represent the village, we need residents of all ages, beliefs, sexes – united by one common goal to prevent oil and gas drilling in Balcombe.

I know you have busy family lives but this is your way of ensuring that your family can continue to enjoy Balcombe in the future. Some of you may feel you are already involved in social clubs and village committees and can't spare the time, but please still consider standing. This is so important. Some of you may feel that you don't have the experience because you have not stood on a committee before. You don't need experience, all you need is to care about Balcombe and want to help save the village from destruction.

Please, please volunteer to be a committee member. For us to have a successful election we need far more candidates than vacancies. This is because our aim is to have a proper election (and not co-opt candidates.)

Elections for FFBRA Committee Members November 2013

To ensure that it is a secret poll. We will achieve this by the following.

- All residents who join FFBRA have been allocated a membership number.
- You will receive through your letter box a FFBRA card with your membership number on it.
- You take your FFBRA card to the "polling office" (not sure where this will be yet). You hand over our FFBRA card and this allows you to put your hand into a box and pull out the voting card with a list of candidates.
- You go somewhere private in the room.
- You select nine candidates on the Voting Card that you want to have represent you on the committee, by marking a cross against their names, and post it into the letterbox provided
- The letterbox is opened witnessed by as many members as would like to be present (minimum of two), who then collate the results.

Balcombe Parish Council Meeting 21 October 2013

There was the regular BPC monthly meeting on Monday evening and as you can imagine Cuadrilla's application to return to the village was the dominant subject.

I know many of you couldn't make it because of pressures of work and family life and so I recorded the majority of the meeting. Please be tolerant of the quality of the recording as this is my first attempt using a Smartphone to record an event and it's a little shaky. The recording can be found on https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5se77af1lvmr5k0/gKQZ9Cyu_t

I only recorded the first hour of the meeting and where possible, I have edited out non gas/drilling related material.

The most important section of the video is in the middle, starting at 17 minutes past the start. This is where Botts explains Cuadrilla's application and the poll. He is speaking quietly and calmly. The reason it is important you listen to him is that BPC will on behalf of the village very soon have to respond to Cuadrilla's new application to return to the village to continue drilling. They (and you in your individual comments should you wish to make them to WSCC) will be given these comments by WSCC "Support, Object, Concern Raised, or No Comment". Do you think that the poll will help BPC in their response? What is its purpose? It will cost £1,500. Do you like the questions? Do you like the options? It will be our fourth poll. Will it help unify the village, or create more division over the results? All serious questions you should think about and make your feelings known to BPC to Botts as Head of the Oil and Gas Working Group or to Alison as Chairman or Rosemary as Parish Clerk.

I will continue to make sure a recording of future Parish Council meetings is available to FFBRA members to ensure transparency and to document any important decisions made.

Please do not think that watching a video is a substitute for going to the meeting. The next meeting will be 25th November and it is really important as many members go as possible. The Parish Council are legally responsible to represent the views of the parishioners. If they don't know your views, they cannot do their job. They have changed the agenda order so that questions come earlier in the proceedings and items relating to Cuadrilla are first on the list. This means that attending in person from 8.00pm to 9.00pm in the Bramble Hall once a month will ensure you know what is going on regarding potential oil/gas drilling in the village. It is very worthwhile to go in person.

Main Points relevant to Oil/Gas Exploration in the Village:

- Proposed poll – cost will be £1,500 – there was some discussion as to what should and should not be included, and discussion as to whether or not the poll should be held.
- The minutes from the last meeting (September 16) were approved. These included a request from one parishioner to Simon Greenwood

(SG) to resign. I did not hear any response to this request from the Chairman or SG. The lady who made the request at the last meeting was not in attendance.

- Two parishioners asked Simon Greenwood (SG) to resign due to conflict of interest as he had interests in “fracking” and there had not been proper consultation process followed. He stated he wouldn’t resign from BPC as there were no grounds to as having an interest in something in the village was not a reason to resign.
- The validity of council procedures in 2010 when the original proposal from Cuadrilla was raised by a concerned parishioner. Alison Stevenson (Chairman) stated that if SG had not mentioned the letter from the council about Cuadrilla’s planning permission there would have been no discussion at all by the Parish Council. This was challenged and there was some debate as to whether or not there had been a valid consultation process followed.
- One parishioner asked SG to state that in view of the publicity generated by the events of the summer, if asked would he state his position in respect of his position on the Balcombe Parish Council – he said that if he was asked he would reply that it was the same as for the last 17 years.
- One parishioner pointed out that the cost of the election of two parish councillors in May had been allocated in the accounts as a “fracking” cost and that this was incorrect as the election was a normal election to elect two parish councillors.
- Our District Councillor, Gary Marsh (GM) said he felt some people felt intimidated at the EA meeting and so he took their questions to Chris Wick after the meeting. He asked Chris Wick if he would feel safe living in our village and Chris said “yes”. GM asked that his statements not be recorded and so they have not been included in the video of the meeting. It was not made clear at the meeting whether he was talking in his capacity as our District Councillor or as an individual and resident of Balcombe.
- There was a letter from one parishioner raising the question of SG having an agricultural mortgage on the land he has leased to Cuadrilla. SG said he didn’t have a mortgage on it.
- Botts Bottomley (BB) has taken over from Rodney Saunders as leader of the Oil and Gas working group.
- BB explained that the proposed poll would be as follows: Question One: Would the residents of Balcombe like the BPC to support or oppose the application, or make no comment, or not sure. Question Two: If a future application was received that involved “fracking” should BPC on behalf of the residents support or oppose the application, treat each application on its merits or not sure. Question Three: If a future application was received that involved oil or gas extraction that did not involve “fracking” should they treat each application on its own merits or not sure.

- BB talked about the EA meeting held last week, and the poll. The EA event was a sell out. There was an issue with the filming which he explained. The video of the EA meeting is now on Youtube.
- BB said they were looking to have a similar event with WSCC to explain the planning process but that this might be after the consultative phase for the planning application.
- Robin Williamson (Treasurer) proposed that a monthly surgery be held by the Parish Council so that parishioners could come and ask parish councillors questions informally. The suggestion was made that this would be on Saturday mornings and would be held in Bramble Hall. November 9 being a likely start date.
- Mike Talman (Balcombe parish ranger) gave an assurance that the newly formed residents' association's posters would not be torn down from notice boards in the village as they were a legitimate village association.
- Bill Ackerman (our County Councillor) gave a brief update on the position with regard to the legal action being taken by WSCC to evict remaining members of the protest site from the roadside verge at Lower Stumble. The court date has been set and the same judge will proceed over the trial in the Royal Courts of High Justice.

Report of the Event at Kirdford and Wisborough Green

A number of us from Balcombe (Sue and Stuart, Juliette, Lyn and Tony) went to lend our support to the people of Wisborough Green and Kirdford last weekend. It was an uplifting experience of a community in action. After church services, the villagers walked from their village church to the drill site. More and more villagers joined the procession, ending in an inspiring speech from one of the leaders of their village. We then walked back and had a lovely lunch at the Cricketers Arms.

On the way home Stuart, Juliette and I, went to visit the camp site that has been provided by a local farmer to the "protectors". It is a field right next to the drill site, set well back from the road. A very pretty spot. There were about six tents there and I spoke to a couple of people I recognised from Balcombe. They explained that they were leaving shortly and would only return if Celtique were successful in obtaining their planning and started to drill.

Nice article in the West Sussex County times.

<http://www.wscountytimes.co.uk/news/local/hundreds-turn-out-for-keep-kirdford-and-wisborough-green-protest-walk-1-5608157>

By the way the lady in the middle of the photograph holding the banner is the actress Susan Jameson (Esther from New Tricks) and behind her is her husband James Bolam (Jack Halford from New Tricks). They both live in the village and walked with us from the village green.

Here is the report from West Sussex County Times:

Hundreds turn out for Keep Kirdford and Wisborough 'Green' protest walk

Hundreds of concerned residents of Kirdford and Wisborough Green converged on land where an energy firm has proposed exploratory drilling between the two villages.

Public comments on Celtique Energie's application before West Sussex County Council close this Thursday (October 24), and yesterday people took to the country lanes in a last ditch appeal to raise awareness and encourage people to make their feelings known.

Objections to the planning application can be made online at www.westsussex.gov.uk or by writing to the local authority quoting WSCC/083/13/KD.

The Keep Kirdford and Wisborough 'Green' campaign group is urging objections to be site specific and not mention fracking, since the application is for exploratory drilling and does not mention hydraulic fracturing.

However, earlier this year, Celtique Energie said in the County Times that if large shale deposits of oil or gas were to be found beneath the Sussex Weald, the exploratory well site could be 'the first step towards fracking' in the vicinity.

The potential of fracking in the area has drawn a small band of campaigners opposed to hydraulic fracturing to set up a camp on land adjacent to the proposed drill site.

Many of them had previously been living near Cuadrilla's well site in the village of Balcombe which was subject to months of protest and disruption over the summer.

But speaking to the County Times, the 'protectors' as they wished to be known said they were only temporarily stopping in the area to raise awareness while the application was at a critical phase.

Kirdford and Wisborough Green

Our nearest threatened neighbours have until 24th October to file their objection to Celtique Energie's Planning Application to drill in their village. Anyone in Sussex can object, so please go to their website

<http://www.no-drilling.co.uk/how-to-object.html>

Follow the links to WSCC, where you can record your objection. Do not mention fracking in the comments, as that will disqualify your objection. If you follow method one, this takes you to the WSCC online system. Once there

you need to click on the link "To submit comments about this application".
This is the same process WSCC will provide to us, in order for us to object to
Cuadrilla's application. So good practice – as well as being a good neighbour.
Any questions call 01444 819 329 for help.

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