



## FFBRA NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWENTY FOUR

### NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR OUR MEMBERS

#### **Lobbying**

Apparently this is now a £2 billion industry in Britain. To understand how the lobbying industry works, we will look at some of the dubious techniques being used to manipulate public opinion.

#### **Lobbying Techniques - Astro-turfing**

This is the practice of building up a fake grass roots movement. It is very big in America and catching on fast in the UK. The term astro-turfing is a derivation of AstroTurf, a brand of synthetic carpeting designed to look like natural grass, a play on the word "grassroots."

An example of this is last week's Sun campaign against Lord Cowdray. A classic bit of astro-turfing. Astro-turfing works best when used to help supposedly position "ordinary people against elites".

Normally you have to have subscription to access the Sun but this article is freely available online. It is an example of astro-turfing.

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/5531421/oil-heir-lord-cowdray-campaigning-against-fracking-in-sussex.html>

The heading is dramatic

*"You fracking hypocrite As the PM urges the UK to get drilling, we expose the energy heir trying to stop it near his country pile in West Sussex."*

*"A PEER worth £500million is fighting fracking near his country home — even though his family fortune came from oil. Lord Cowdray's great-grandad discovered the world's biggest oil well in Mexico. But he campaigns to stop drilling in Fernhurst, West Sussex....."*

The article then mentions: *"his £500 million fortune (twice), living in the lap of luxury, outdoor swimming pools, pony paddocks and stables, two lakes, landscaped gardens, former playboy and film producer, his inheritance and his religion (Buddhist)."*

The reporter, then has a quick dig at other rich landowners in Fernhurst: *"fund manager Marcus Adams, 56, who earns an estimated £400,000 a year"*. and then she

quotes David Cameron appealing on behalf of Europe to “*save Europe from their dependence on Putin*”...

Of course it does not mention that Lord Cowdray lives in the village and that the rest of the “ordinary” villagers don’t want fracking in Fernhurst either. Or that the Chief Executive of Celtique lives in a £2.4 million pound house in Buckinghamshire and stands to make millions from share options or that David Cameron’s father-in-law is a multimillionaire (Viscount Astor) or that Dave went to Eton (much more important to let us know Lord Cowdray is a Buddhist). By the way Marcus is not a fund manager nor sadly does he earn £400,000 a year.

The purpose of the article in the Sun is to persuade their readers that a wealthy elite is stopping the country from saving Europe from Putin. And that the Sun readers can do their bit to stop this by signing the petition and help Celtique frack Sussex. This is truly ironic because Celtique Energie is being funded by Avista Capital Partners (a New York based private equity firm formed by ex Credit Suisse bankers). Avista injected \$50 million into Celtique last May and must be furious about the lack of progress.

The writer, Lynn Davidson, who has produced this “exclusive”, asks the Sun reader to sign the Sun’s petition to the PM “To frack to the future”. The idea being to show that ordinary folk support fracking. Lynn Davidson recently moved from the Daily Mail to the Sun and she is a very experienced journalist. I think we can expect this petition to run and run and that it will finally be used as evidence that “ordinary people” want fracking in England to happen. The Sun is owned by Murdoch and is the second most popular newspaper in the UK (the Daily Mail is number one). It reaches over 6 million readers. This story will have been placed in the Sun rather than the Daily Mail because the Mail is perceived a Tory newspaper whereas the Sun is seen as more politically independent.

The “article” then goes on to list what they see as the five obstacles to cheap gas:

1. The wrongmove.org movement
2. Frack Off
3. Friends of the Earth
4. Red Tape
5. NIMBYS

The fact that they have placed the wrongmove.org in the first position is because the legal blockage of the site at Fernhurst is a real problem for Celtique. The drill site has been surrounded by land owned by people who have registered an injunction that they do not give permission to Celtique to drill under their land. Under current law Celtique will be guilty of contempt of court as well as trespassing if they drill laterally away from the drill site.

Without an astro-turfing campaign, Sun readers would be outraged at the idea of foreign companies coming into a community and demanding to be able to drill under

people's land and homes without their permission. To get them on side, it is important to make the Sun readers feel that these landowners are somehow very different from them (and not mention the foreign investment). "Support Fracking in Sussex to help New York investment bankers get their bonuses" might not work.

### **What can you do?**

Just understanding the technique means you will spot its use. When you see it being used, please point it out to your friends, family and colleagues. No one likes being manipulated and so it can backfire on the companies placing the stories. A nice example of this is on Twitter.

Another news reporter, Paul Sims, from the Sun put this on Twitter on March 26 trying to keep the story alive.

*"Oil heir Lord Cowdray campaigning against fracking in Sussex | The Sun | News  
<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/5531421/oil-heir-lord-cowdray-campaigning-against-fracking-in-sussex.html> ... great scoop by @ByLynnDavidson"*

Nicely countered by Sussex Owl

*"Perhaps run scoop on how Celtique have set fracking back by submitting a seriously flawed proposal to SDNPA?"*

And then brilliant comment by NeilyB

*"I remember when journalism was journalism. Note to self become expert for hire to media #£s4oldrope"*

A genuine grass roots movement is the wrongmove campaign which aims to get as many home owners as possible to register that they do not give permission to fracking companies to drill under their home. If you have not done so already, please join the others, and add your home. This only takes 5 minutes but is very important (must be if the Sun newspaper rates it as the number one obstacle to fracking in the UK). All you have to do is go to [www.wrongmove.org](http://www.wrongmove.org) and put in your post code. This takes you to another page where you enter your email address, and postal address. You can enter your telephone number if you want to but it is not mandatory. You are then registered in Greenpeace's database as stating *"I hereby declare that I do not permit fracking companies to drill under my home"*. As of 4 April 2014 44,082 people have signed and the number is growing daily.

### **Government plans this year to change trespass laws to help the fracking industry**

Currently no one can drill under your land or house without your permission. If they do, they are guilty of trespass.

This trespass law is a real problem for the fracking companies as England is a crowded country and the oil and gas companies will not be able to drill very far without reaching land belonging to someone opposed to what they are doing. The government's response to this situation is a proposed change to the law which they

wish to bring into force this year in the Growth Bill. There are even mentions in the press of these changes being included in the Queen's speech.

It looks as if there is a lot of work to be done trying to oppose the Growth Bill which is proposing to give the right to companies to drill wherever they like under any property. Democracy appears to have left this country with the government changing the rules and regulations at every turn in order to facilitate the destruction of the country by fracking.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2594644/Trespass-law-overhauled-make-easier-frackers-Firms-able-access-underground-gas-without-asking-landowners-permission.html>

### **The Growth Bill, if passed into British law, would mean landowners in America would have more protection from fracking companies than landowners in England.**

In America drilling companies need permission to drill under someone's land or home. However, recently *"Energy company Hilcorp is trying to use a 1961 law that lets companies bundle properties of people who don't sign drilling leases with those of their neighbors who do in what's called "forced pooling," the New York Times reported. If enough landowners sign the leases, even those opposed would have to allow drilling under their land"*.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/50-year-old-law-may-force-pennsylvania-landowners-allow-fracking-under-their-properties-1566887?>

But even if they are successful in resurrecting this "pooling" law in America, it would still require permission from the majority of landowners in the area for drilling to be allowed under someone's home in America (so would not be possible in the case of Fernhurst or Balcombe village). The Growth Bill, if passed, will allow Cuadrilla to drill under our homes whether we object or not.

### **Marcus Adam's Letter to Andrew Tyrie on the "Growth Bill"**

I hope all FFBRA member will email or write to our MP, Francis Maude on these proposed changes to remove our right to prevent trespass under our own property. His email address is francismaudemp@parliament.uk. Alternatively you can write to him at Francis Maude MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

If you are in need of inspiration, here is letter from Marcus Adams from Frack Free Fernhurst to his MP, Andrew Tyrie on this subject.

Dear Andrew,

Today *The Times* reports that in the Growth Bill to be put before the next session of parliament, the Government intends to remove the requirement for companies involved in oil and gas exploration and extraction to obtain property holder permission to drill under their land. This is despite rights of ownership of land below the surface going back to Roman times, and recently confirmed by the Supreme Court.

Frankly, I think this is despicable, and hopefully will become a major electoral issue. The fact that this Government, that I have supported all my adult life, wants to remove my rights so that a few individuals and their (mostly foreign) financial backers can make a quick buck, demonstrates just how little respect it has for the views of the majority of people.

There is growing evidence of serious environmental and health issues associated with Fracking. These concerns have been shown by studies from Colorado, Dale and Cornell Universities in the USA and work done by the American Association of Paediatricians. I honestly don't know how the senior ministers responsible can ignore such evidence.

The vast majority of people living in Fernhurst do not want this development to go ahead and are becoming increasingly vocal about it. The word is also spreading to many other parts of the country.

I have nothing against you personally, and believe that you have represented this constituency well, but I can no longer support a party which puts financial gain above people's health and the safety of the environment.

I do not buy the Energy Security argument either. Mr Cameron's statement that the situation in Ukraine should be a wakeup call, and therefore we should embrace Fracking is just ludicrous. The fact is that, even if we do get gas from Fracking the hell out of this country, it will be sold on the open market to countries like France and Germany who are much more reliant on Russian gas than we are, yet have a moratorium in place.

Please can you tell Mr Cameron and Mr Fallon that they are making a huge mistake?

Yours sincerely

Marcus Adams

## **Good News from Wrexham, North Wales. Councillors support the local people and turn down planning application from Dart Energy**

<http://www.leaderlive.co.uk/news/132415/anti-fracking-campaigners-celebrate-landmark-vote.aspx?>

An application to drill a 1,000 metre vertical well by Dart Energy was turned down by the councillors of Wrexham, despite the fact that the chairman recommended it and said the application needed to be considered on its own merits and did not include fracking.

*The council recommendation was to grant planning permission for 60 days test drilling, 24 hours a day plus 5 days either end for setting up and dismantling of the drilling rig. Up to 50 lorries a day during each of those 5 days was proposed to fetch and remove materials to the site ready to drill as borehole 950 metres deep in an area approximately 1 kilometre from the furthest reaches of the old Gresford Colliery workings.*

*Despite the council chairman advising that this was not fracking but a test borehole, several councillors expressed reservations about the safety of the borehole, in particular any escape of gas - not just vertically, but laterally into the Gresford fault and then into the old mine tunnels. The council was reminded that the Gresford disaster had been caused by a large gas explosion. No-one knew the extent of the gas down there and there was a concern that test drilling could hit a large pocket of gas with disastrous consequences. A motion was put to the planning committee to reject the planning application which was passed by 17 to 1 to rousing cheers and applause from protesters in the public gallery.*

<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2014/03/516168.html?c=on>

We must hope that our councillors are similarly minded to stand up for the wishes and concerns of the residents of Sussex.

## **FFBRA Response to the DECC AMEC report**

This was submitted last week and covered the following areas.

- Health implications of toxic and radioactive air emissions.
- Synergy of Emissions
- Monitoring and Mitigation of Emissions
- Traffic
- Landscape and visual impacts
- Wildlife
- The delusion of community benefits and property devaluation
- Insurance
- Employment
- Specious community benefits

The key recommendation we made was that no further licenses should be awarded. We also recommend that in the interests of not recreating the patchwork of differing legislation and differing outcomes that left the USA vulnerable to so many major negative effects from unconventional gas and oil exploration – that those licenses that have been awarded so far must be able to be placed under review if they have

not met the criteria laid out in this draft licensing plan, they should also be subject to an EIA.

A copy can be found on our website [www.frackfreebalcombe.co.uk](http://www.frackfreebalcombe.co.uk)

## **EVENTS**

### **Balcombe.**

#### **Coffee and a Chat, Half Moon Pub, Thursday 10 April 10.30 am to 12.00 noon**

Do come along. Great coffee, pastries and good company.

#### **Balcombe Parish Council Meeting, 23 April 8.00 pm**

Bramble Hall, Balcombe. Please attend.

#### **Cuadrilla's Application goes before the WSCC Planning Committee, Tuesday 29 April**

To be held in Horsham (normally this would be held in Chichester but it has been relocated due to a problem with the roof in the offices at Chichester). Probably in the morning; more information will be posted as we know it. The gallery holds 200. Please come and support our speakers who will be presenting the reasons why planning should not be granted to Cuadrilla to the councillors. It is very important to have as many Balcombe residents in the public gallery as possible. Should we hire a coach? Car sharing? Email [suetaylorbalcombe@gmail.com](mailto:suetaylorbalcombe@gmail.com) and let me know preferences.

### **Beyond Balcombe**

#### **Fracking in Hampshire, Campaign for Protection of Rural England, Thursday 10 April 8.00 pm**

Elizabeth Hall, in Raven Road, Hook

Speaker Caroline Dibden, former production geologist with Shell.

*"Fracking has not taken place in north Hampshire, but there are layers of the earth where oil and gas can be found. This is centred on the Humbly Grove oilfield at Herriard, and there are oilfields either side of the B3349 at the Golden Pot junction near South Warnborough".*

Tickets cost £8 per person, and £10 for non-members, and include wine and soft drinks. For more information, call 01962 779185.

#### **Forest Row, Vision of Sussex, Ten years on,**

**Saturday 26 April 10.15 am to 4 pm**

**Ruskin Hall, by Top Cark Park, Emerson College, Forest Row, Sussex RH18 5JX**

A day of talks, forum, photos giving a vision of today's Sussex and tomorrow's prospects.  
Hosted by Vanessa Underwood. To book lunch contact 01825-790773.

Admission free. Donations welcome.

10.15 am Coffee and introductions

10.45 am Forum

12.45 pm Lunch (or bring your own)

1.45 pm Artwork, Slides, Short film

2.15 pm Ian Crane

3.15 pm Final Plenum with Youth Vision

4.00 pm Tea and Music with Portia Cox and Ben Grove

4.30 pm Optional Free Space for Discussion

Speakers/ Musicians

Ian Crane (Oil Executive)

Wendy Cook (Real Nutrition)

John Twyford (Dairy Farmer)

John Marking (Forestry)

Portia Cox and Ben Grove (Musicians)

David Pinnegar (Physicist)

Others (a lawyer, a conservationist, a water researcher)

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