



FFBRA NEWSLETTER NUMBER THIRTY ONE

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR OUR MEMBERS

The infamous “Drilling Under Homes without our Permission” (Infrastructure Bill) has just been changed over the weekend to include waste disposal.

New amendments* to the Infrastructure Bill were published on Saturday, **just one working day** before the bill's House of Lords Committee Stage (tomorrow, Tuesday 14th).

One new clause approves **‘passing any substance through, or putting any substance into, deep-level land or infrastructure installed in deep-level land.’** Deep level ground within the context of this bill can be as little as 300 metres (less than 1,000 feet) below the surface.

Apart from the ‘substances’ involved in the act of fracking, this could then include re-injection of radioactive waste under our property. Fracking will produce very large quantities of waste flow-back fluid, laced with radioactive substances flushed out from the depths.

The amendments to the Bill now state that land under our property could be used **‘in any way** for the purposes of exploiting petroleum or deep geothermal energy.’ This moves the goal post way past simple “access”.

Another amendment to the Infrastructure Bill reads **"the right of use includes the right to leave deep level land in a different condition from the condition it was in before ... (including by leaving any infrastructure or substance in the land)".**

Sussex farm owner Beki Adam comments "That goes way beyond the claim of 'simple access' - and it is quietly added after the public consultation closed. It would allow the oil and gas industry to use our land as a dump for the radioactive waste fracking produces. Clearly few landowners would agree to that - so the government intend to take away our current rights to stop it. This is the step too far.'

A further amendment stipulates that, 'No shale gas extraction may take place before the operator has measured the baseline levels of methane in the groundwater over a 12 month period.' However this baseline measurement will not help us here in Balcombe (or anywhere else in the Weald) because Cuadrilla plan to drill for oil first,

so no baselines for us.

But even for areas where drilling is for shale gas, if you wanted to get genuine baseline data, surely you would need to take it before drilling started not wait until the extraction phase?

The government had a public consultation on this Bill and over 40,647 objections (99%) but this was done before announcing these amendments.

Please could all FFBRA members pass this information on to all farmers and landowners they know, particularly Balcombe Estate, Borde Hill Estate, Paddockhurst Estate, anyone connected with the Country Land Owners Alliance (CLA), Farmers Union and also all estate agents. Plus if you know any members of the House of Lords, please contact them and let them know this is being debated tomorrow (Tuesday 14 October 2014) in the House of Lords and ask them to attend.

These changes are a serious threat to landowners' rights as well as to the rights of all home owners. Allowing this to happen hugely devalues land which can become contaminated from below and made unsaleable. The right for an oil/gas company to dump toxic waste dump under your land – without your permission, with no compensation would be legalised by this Act of Parliament. Plus the oil and gas companies will have no liability for the damage they do. 300 metres is not even below the aquifer in some parts of the country.

In the case of Balcombe this would allow Cuadrilla not only to drill, but also to dump toxic waste under the village. Really bad news for those of us whose houses are on top of the natural faults that go down way beyond the three hundred metre level.

If this Bill goes through, then there even more reason to stop horizontal drilling anyway near your property. This is difficult to do since the horizontal bore hole can travel for miles from the access point. The high pressure re-injection of waste products is unthinkable addition to the inherent environmental problems of fracking.*

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2014-2015/0002/amend/ml002-VII.htm>

What's On

Balcombe

Balcombe Parish Council Meeting 15 October, Bramble Hall 8.00 pm

The seating arrangements of the councillors has now been changed so that the parish councillors no longer sit in a rectangle (which meant some councillors previously had their backs to members of the public) but instead they are now in an inverted U-shape. Much more welcoming – plus it is now easier to hear what they are saying. Most fracking related subjects are discussed in the first hour. Do go along if you can.

Beyond Balcombe

Public Meeting, Fracking at Horley, Monday 13th October. 7.00 pm

Empire Hall, Victoria Road RH6 7AW (Opposite the Air Balloon car park) This is being organised by local residents and Frack Free Surrey

Drilling has recently started at Horse Hill which is about one mile north of Gatwick and about one mile to the west of Horley.

This site had direct access to a major oil and gas pipe line network and if fracked, could become a huge oil industry development site.

West Sussex County Council Debate Fracking 17 October 10.30 am

County Hall North, Chart Way, Horsham, RH12 1XH

Public Meeting. The Debate will be on whether West Sussex should be declared "Frack Free" and will be chaired by Councillor Pieter Montyn a District and County Councillor from West Wittering.

Due to the limited space at the venue and the likely public interest, tickets are available in advance for people wishing to attend. To apply for a ticket please email oilandgas@westsussex.gov.uk or write to Democratic Services, West Sussex County Council, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1RQ. There will be some tickets held back and available on the day.

Public meeting on Fracking, Billingshurst, 28 October, 7.30 pm

Main Hall, Billingshurst Centre, Roman Way, RH14 9QW.

Celtique have planning permission to drill at Broadford Bridge near Billingshurst. This was granted to them by West Sussex County Council in February 2013. They have recently applied for a waste permit and have started to prepare the site.

This meeting is to raise local awareness of unconventional oil and gas drilling and is organised by Billingshurst residents and Frack Free Sussex. All are welcome. Free admission.

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