



FFBRA NEWSLETTER NUMBER THIRTY SIX

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR OUR MEMBERS

Charles Metcalfe has been elected Balcombe Parish Council Chair

I am delighted to say that Charles Metcalfe was elected as Chair of the Balcombe Parish Council on the 20 May. The vote for Chair was the first item on the agenda and the selection was by a show of hands by all parish councillors. This was followed by a vote for the Vice Chair. Katherine Daniel was elected Vice Chair.

This process of selecting the Chair and Vice Chair should be done annually at the parish council meeting held in May.

When will the next full parish council election be? The next one will be in May 2019. These should happen every four years (provided of course more there are more than eleven candidates).

Sue Taylor has been elected as Chair of FFBRA

Charles decided, due to the time commitments as Chair of the Parish Council, to step down as Chair of FFBRA. He will remain on the FFBRA Committee.

At the next FFBRA committee meeting Sue Taylor was elected as Chair of FFBRA and Malcolm Kenward as Vice Chair.

FFBRA Elections in November

The FFBRA constitution mandates elections for the committee every year and an election will take place in November if we have at least ten people nominated. Last year we did not have an election because we only had nine candidates. Fingers crossed – this year will be different.

So do please consider standing on the FFBRA committee. If any FFBRA member is interested in what our committee meetings are like and would like to come along to a

meeting, just email members@frackfreebalcombe.co.uk or telephone Sue on 01444 819 329. Committee meetings happen approximately once a month.

Traffic Parking on London Road

The police have contacted the parish council about cars parking on London Road near the train station. They want to let people know that it is legal to park on London Road. Although it might take a bit of getting used to, having cars parking there may be a blessing in disguise because it will slow the traffic down.

Here is what Jayne Milne, Police Community Support Officer has to say on this subject

“Since yellow lines were painted in Newlands this has shifted the commuter vehicles elsewhere, some of which are now parking on London Road. We have received several complaints about it and I have endeavoured to explain to residents that as there are no restrictions on London Road, drivers are perfectly entitled to park here. In fact, I’ve often wondered why no one has parked there until now. I appreciate that it might be difficult for some to get used to as no one has ever parked there before but I hope they will soon see the benefits as parked cars act as natural traffic calming and will reduce the speeds of the vehicles travelling through the village as they have to stop to give way to oncoming traffic.”

Legal Dispute between Sussex fracking companies

Celtique and Magellan are in legal dispute over Broadford Bridge exploratory well. This is the well just outside Billingshurst.

Celtique Energie, the operator of the site at Broadford Bridge, near Billingshurst, has begun a legal action against its partner, Magellan Petroleum UK. The claim concerns Magellan’s \$2 million contribution to the operating costs of the Broadford Bridge well.

Magellan has issued a defence and counterclaim to Celtique Energie on 1st April, arguing that the cash calls were not valid. It said Celtique had failed “as operator of the PEDLs to comply with the contractual accounting procedures, adhere to an agreed-upon drilling schedule and otherwise properly execute the parties’ development plans.”

The three Weald PEDLs currently held jointly by Magellan and Celtique Energie are 231, 234, and 243, representing 124 thousand acres. Magellan believes they may be prospective for oil and gas from the Kimmeridge Clay, Liassic, and other formations. The licences were due to expire in June 2016 unless the partners drilled an exploratory well. The Department of Energy and Climate Change extended the term until 2019 for 234 and 243 if Celtique drilled the well at Broadford Bridge.

Last year, Celtique Energie was refused planning permission for two other wells in West Sussex: at Fernhurst in the South Downs National Park and another nearby at Boxal Bridge, between the villages of Wisborough Green and Kirdford.

EA Consultation on Standard Permitting

The Environment Agency has just finished a public consultation on “streamlining” the issuing of waste permits for onshore oil and gas exploration. The public consultation was for three months ending on the 24 June 2015.

FFBRA only became aware of this important consultation a week before the end date. Huge thanks to all the FFBRA members who worked hard to understand the implications of the proposed changes and helped to produce the FFBRA response to EA’s proposals. A copy of FFBRA response can be found on our website. www.frackfreebalcombe.co.uk.

Cuadrilla’s Lancashire Plans

Cuadrilla’s applications to frack at two sites in Lancashire went before Lancashire County Council last week. These applications are important because they are the first applications for fracking in the UK since 2011.

The first application to be considered was at Preston New Road

This is for four wells to be drilled and fracked plus 80 seismic monitoring stations. This application has been recommended for approval by the planning officer.

This application is for a huge underground area. *“The maximum extent of the below ground works (for vertical and horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing) as projected to the surface would extend to a total area of 562ha.”* This is for an area of 1,388 acres. (The whole of the Balcombe parish is 4,800 acres).

The councillors raised a motion to refuse the application. The councillors then withdrew to determine the wording of the motion. After receiving advice from the council’s legal advisors, they voted 7 for the motion, 7 against with 1 abstention. The Chairman had the casting vote and voted to refuse the motion.

The proceedings then took a dramatic turn when the councillors insisted that the advice they had been given which impacted their voting should be made public because they felt they had been put under intolerable pressure and that the public needed to be made aware of this.

The following day when the advice was published, Councillor Hayhurst said the written advice was **not** the same as they had been given verbally. He said *“I am absolutely appalled by it. This is not in the sort of vein that we were advised yesterday.”*

The written version from David Manley QC, now published on the council’s website, specifically says a refusal would not constitute breaking the law. It says: *“While a refusal which is not backed by substantial objective evidence cannot be described as unlawful, it nonetheless can readily be described as unreasonable in planning terms”.*

Cllr Hayhurst said: *“The counsel’s opinion was that we as councillors should support the officer’s view”.....“It said that if the planning officer’s view is that there isn’t a visual impact, then there isn’t a visual impact...”“But it is up to members to make that decision”.*

“You can’t just say that because the council’s own specialist advice service has raised no objection there is no objection. That is why we have a democratic process of members determining aspects of development and planning applications. It is for us to decide that.”

Cllr Hayhurst asked for another vote to be taken on the motion to refuse but the committee chair, Munsif Dad, would not allow it.

The proceedings were adjourned until Monday morning 10 .00 am 29 June 2015 and can be watched live on the internet through the council’s webcasting service.

Cuadrilla’s Second Application to frack at Roseacre

The second application was for four wells to be drilled and fracked at Roseacre in Lancashire. This application was turned down on traffic grounds. However, a separate application for 88 individual pads, each 20 metres by 20 metres for seismic testing and three monitoring boreholes was approved. This was a huge disappointment to the residents of Roseacre.

The deputy chair of the development control committee, Kevin Ellard, had questioned whether the monitoring array was still needed since they had turned down the application for the drill site. He said *“If you turned down an application for a battleship you wouldn’t then pass the application for a dry dock.”*

Opponents of the scheme argued that the 91 monitoring sites could be used in future for drilling, would lead to a loss of agricultural land and would contribute to the industrialisation of the countryside.

Councillors were told the application for the monitoring stations had to be considered on its merits as a separate application. In a vote the monitoring application was approved by nine in favour and four against with one abstention.

What Next For Cuadrilla in Sussex?

The big question for us is “Will Cuadrilla sell its Sussex PEDL licenses to another operator?” Once the 14th licensing round has completed (announcement expected soon), we will know which companies will have the rights to drill the Weald.

David Lenigas, Chairman of UKOG has already said that he wants to frack from the M25 to the Isle of Wight. His company is one to watch as a potential purchaser. UKOG are the lead operator at Horse Hill and have recently increased their share holding there.

IGas, which owns the Singleton well, is another company to watch as they also have significant holdings in the Weald.

For production wells to be economically viable in the parish of Balcombe, the operator will need to have a considerable number of other sites nearby in Sussex. The protection offered

to National Parks and Areas of Natural Beauty was removed from the Infrastructure Bill by the last Parliament. Protection is now at the discretion of the Minister of State, Amber Rudd.

And what has happened to Lord Browne?

Lord Browne has left Cuadrilla to be Chairman of L1 which is owned by Russian oligarch Mikhail M. Fridman. Controversially L1 has recently bought RWE Dea, the oil and natural gas unit of the German utility RWE. The deal includes a large natural gas field in the North Sea, called Breagh. The British government tried but failed to stop the deal going through because of the threat to energy security for the UK if the government were forced to issue sanctions against Russia and an important North Sea gas field was owned by someone closely linked to Putin.

Lord Browne continues to build on his Chinese connections; Cuadrilla is funded by the Chinese government through CNOOC/Kerogen/AJ Lucas. He has become Chairman of Huawei UK. Huawei, the parent company is not publicly traded, instead to own share you have to be an employee of Huawei and a Chinese national.

What's On

Balcombe

Coffee and a Chat, Half Moon Pub, Thursday Mornings

10.30 am to 12.00 noon. Meet up with FFBRA members for a chat and a cup of coffee. This takes place every week – numbers vary and there is no fixed agenda.

Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan Final Drop In Session, Sunday 28 June, 2.00 pm till 4.00 pm

Next week you will receive through your letter box a questionnaire about the draft Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan. The results of this questionnaire will be used to finalise the plan which will shape the future of Balcombe until 2031.

This is your last opportunity to come to a drop in session and question the Parish councillors about the plan before you receive your questionnaire next week.

Details of the plan can also be found on the parish council website. There are also hard copies at the Half Moon but please do not take these away. They are to read in the pub.

Balcombe Parish Council Meeting, 15 July, Bramble Hall 8.00 pm

Do come along. The public is very welcome to attend. There is no meeting in August and so this will be the last parish council meeting until September 16th.