



## **FFBRA NEWSLETTER NUMBER SIXTEEN**

### **NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR OUR MEMBERS**

#### **Balcombe Parish Council Poll**

Balcombe residents on the electoral roll will receive a polling card this week from the Electoral Reform Service this week. You will be asked to answer 3 questions and provided with 4 possible responses. Your response will be confidential.

Since the government has stated that unconventional oil/gas companies must gain “social licence” (i.e. support from locals) in order to operate in communities, this provides Balcombe with the opportunity to say “no” to Cuadrilla’s application to return to Balcombe and continue with their activities.

The first question refers to Cuadrilla’s new application to return to the village to “flow test” and asks how the village would like BPC to respond to their request. Should they

1. Support
2. **OPPOSE**
3. Make no comment
4. Not sure

When answering this question or discussing it with your friends and neighbours, please ask yourself:

**Do you want this industry in and around Balcombe? Do you want the traffic, noise, pollution and disturbance to the village? Will money compensate us for this and the loss of property values?**

**Will it provide long term local jobs or just short term jobs for transient workers from outside our area? Will this industry destroy permanent jobs in Sussex in agriculture, forestry, tourism, recreation and other small businesses?**

If a high proportion of the residents vote “Oppose”, Balcombe village will return to peace and quiet, and our lovely countryside will be preserved for ourselves and future generations to enjoy.

The next two questions are to provide guidance to BPC for the future. In answering the second questions, please ask yourself

**Do you, your children and grandchildren want to live in a rural landscape or an industrial estate in ten, twenty years’ time? The answer to these questions will affect future generations living in the parish.**

Question Two and Three asks about future applications to explore and produce oil or gas throughout the parish (not just at Lower Stumble).

If a future application is made, by Cuadrilla or another company, to “frack” in Balcombe, how should BPC on behalf of the residents respond? And also if the application did not include “fracking”, what should the response be?

1. Support
2. **OPPOSE**
3. Treat each application on its merits
4. Not sure

When answering these questions, please be aware that sophisticated PR companies employed by the oil and gas industry will be analysing the results of our village poll and then using your answers to suit their media campaigns. It may seem fair minded to say “treat each application on its merits” but this answer will be “interpreted” by these agencies in their press releases as “did not oppose”. Likewise a “not sure” response. It might seem fair to say “not sure” as an answer to a question about an application you have not seen and that does not exist yet. Sadly this response may, again, be misinterpreted to mean “did not oppose”

This poll has three questions and four possible answers to each; a grand total of twelve possible answers for you to select from.

Only three of these answers give a clear statement that the residents of Balcombe do not support oil/ gas drilling in the parish and that is the **OPPOSE** response. The other nine possible answers can all be spun by the PR companies when they produce their statistics in support of the oil/gas industry’s industrial activities in our parish. **Be aware of this when answering.**

Having nine possible responses that can be interpreted as FOR Cuadrilla and only three possible answers that can be interpreted as AGAINST will give PR companies **scope for bias** when they report your answers in the press, or use your answers to lobby parliament or our local government.

## Why are Foreign Companies buying licences to drill for oil/gas in the UK?

- Government is cheerleading for the industry
- Tax concessions
- Our regulations are lower than in other countries which makes it cheaper to operate here. We do not for instance make Environment Impact Assessments mandatory and we allow the industry to self- regulate.
- The UK has no rules about the minimum distance fracking can take place to homes or to reservoirs.
- Both the Head of the Environment Agency and the Minister for Planning, Nick Boles have vowed to “streamline” processes to make it easier for the industry to operate.
- Our regulations are fragmented across various agencies and because high volume high pressure fracking is new here (only one well has been fracked this way so far in the UK), these agencies are very inexperienced and understaffed. And in the case of the Environment Agency staffing cuts of 15% are planned.
- UK Oil/ Gas companies, such as BP, do not want to taint their “retail” brand so they are not competing with foreign companies for the licenses. Total of France can risk the bad publicity of buying the rights to frack in Lincolnshire because they no longer hold any retail outlets in the UK having sold them about six months ago. The few petrol stations left still branded “Total” are not owned by them. These will soon be “rebadged” after protesters, mistakenly thinking they were still owned by Total, picketed them.
- Fracking is banned in their home country

## Objection Tips

- Do not mention fracking or your objection will be binned
- Do not mention house values or your objection will be binned
- Do not just object to wider government energy policy or your objection will be binned

Take note of these three important points.

Cuadrilla have been careful in this application to expressly rule out fracking, so it is important that your objection does not include the word “fracking”.

Remember when we ask the Environment Agency at the meeting in St Mary’s Church how they able to process so many objections related to issue of the Waste Permit, their answer was that they binned all objections that mentioned the word “fracking” (which was most of them). Don’t let your objection go to waste. **If you mention fracking your objection will not count.**

Successive governments since WWII have encouraged people to become home owners and for many people the value of their home is a significant component of their financial security. Nevertheless the current planning law prohibits arguing that negative impact on the price of houses due to the proximity of an oil/ gas site is a valid reason to object. So don't try this one.

However much you many feel like criticising the government's energy policies, please don't do this in your objection. It will be deemed irrelevant and again will lead to your objection being rejected.

## **Summary of Cuadrilla's Application**

Made in the name of Cuadrilla Balcombe Limited. This is a small company with few assets.

Cuadrilla Balcombe Limited are asking for temporary planning permission. However, Cuadrilla have bought a 30 year lease- and have already drilled approximately 2,750 down and 1,000 feet horizontally. They have drilled through the aquifer. How can this be described as temporary? They may, on completion of their "flow test" close off the well at the top but the hole bored through the rock and the much of the chemicals pumped into the ground will remain. The substrata will never be the same – so how can they "restore" it or say this was temporary?

The micrite layer that Cuadrilla say they have targeted and remained within is only 33metre thick. The shale is much thicker (and more financially interesting) but in our objection we can't cite this as a reason for suspecting that their real interest lies in this shale. Cuadrilla's first planning application, obtained in 2010, was for fracking shale. Now in this second application they are at pains to state they will not frack *this* particular well.

However, this does not mean they will not frack other wells in Sussex nor does it rule out their selling their development license to another company that will frack.

Cuadrilla own the petroleum development license for a large part of Sussex.

No Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) was done before they commenced drilling in the summer. They are not proposing to do an EIA this time. This means that the polluting effects of their activities and its impact on the bats, badgers, birds, and fish will never be able to be proven because we do not have baseline information.

They state the site lies 380 metres from the nearest residential property and 800 metres south of the limits of village of Balcombe. By the limits of the village are they referring to Oldlands Avenue? It does not make this clear? Why not say the site is located within the parish of Balcombe?

What are they asking to be allowed to do? They are seeking the right to "flow test" for six months at any time in the next three years with only seven days' notice. All the benefits of this arrangement are for Cuadrilla. This gives them the opportunity to delay the work until more government regulation has been reduced. To delay until after the next general election. To give very little notice so that protestors have no

time to mobilise in force. To choose an advantageous time of year (winter not summer) and avoid the holiday season.

Balcombe residents, however, will have the threat of Cuadrilla's aggressive use of chemicals and all the ensuing disruption (traffic, police, protestors, media intrusion) hanging over them for three years if this application is granted.

Nowhere in the application does it make clear the amount of water or the chemicals to be used in the "acid etching" and testing the rate at which the oil flows. Without this information it is impossible to know what they really plan to do. Jane Moseley on behalf of WSCC Planning department has asked for this information and been refused.

There is no information about where the radioactive flow back water will go to be treated.

They describe the various stages of their work but give very little information other than lorry movements. Surely we should be given more information about what is on the lorries and what will be done?

### **Stage One**

Acid Etching, Flow Test and Monitoring – the hole they are pouring the hydrochloric acid into is huge (it is at least 2,750 feet down plus 1,000 feet along). Despite Jane Mosely's specific request for information about the amount of water required and details of the chemicals used, Cuadrilla are refusing to give this information. Why not?

Traffic – 134 lorry movements. Cuadrilla have specifically stated that they will not be going through Cuckfield so that all these lorries will go past Balcombe primary school.

They have stated this first stage will last for three to five weeks and that after it has been completed they will shut down for 60 days.

### **Stage Two**

Sealing and plugging the well. This takes four to eight weeks.

Traffic – 36 lorry movements (again past Balcombe primary school)

### **Stage Three**

Removing the equipment.

Traffic – 42 lorry movements (again past Balcombe primary school)

### **Flaring**

They are requesting permission to use a 13.7 metre high flare continuously for seven days.

### **Location**

Cuadrilla in their application make much of the fact that while the site is located in an area of outstanding natural beauty, it is an existing site which has already been

subject to drilling activities. This makes fighting this application to “flow test” by acid washing even more important because every step in the process towards industrialisation makes the next step easier. Granting Cuadrilla this application will take them one step further towards production.

## **Lack of Information**

There is an interesting email exchange between Jane Moseley, Principal Planner, WSCC Planning and Nigel Gould, Associate- Waste Planning at ARUP on behalf of Cuadrilla – see the documentation published by WSCC titled “Additional Information from Applicant 3 Jan14.pdf

“Please confirm how much water would be used and how it would come to the site (tankers or borehole); and how much hydrochloric acid would be used and what impact this is likely to have”, Jane Moseley, Principal Planner, WSCC.

Response from Nigel Gould, “It is not possible to detail the exact specification”. Jane’s questions are important ones. Without unequivocal answers to these questions, how can we evaluate this application?

## **Initial Review and Possible Objections**

We suggest that if members wish to review the planning application they start with the Planning Statement. We need to raise objections to WSCC that are "material considerations", unfortunately if we mention fracking, the cumulative effect, fears for what might happen in the future and effect on house prices these will not be taken into account and we risk our objections being ignored. From our reading of all the documentations initial concerns are as follows.

We would be most grateful to our members to email FFBRA on [members@frackfree-balcombe.co.uk](mailto:members@frackfree-balcombe.co.uk) and add to this list so we can start to create a list for the planning consultant and start to form guidance documentation for individual objections.

1. **Timescale:** The original planning in 2010 stated that the initial well test, short well testing period and restoration phases would be 35 days. The new planning application states that the activities will take over 5 months. Why the difference? The activity is proposed to be limited to 6 months, anytime in the next three years with just seven days’ notice of commencement
2. **Traffic:** There is no transport assessment. All the HGV traffic will be directed through Balcombe village and past the primary school.
3. **Noise:** The flare noise is excluded from the noise impact appraisal despite the later reference of "noise produced by flaring is variable and can vary from barely perceptible to a more significant level"

4. **Ecology:** A new bat survey was conducted after drilling had started, during drilling, against no baseline data
5. **Water:** Water will be trucked in, is this in addition to the abstraction from the water monitoring well. How much water will be used?
6. **Restoration:** The restoration plan is totally inadequate
7. **Acid Etching:** We are still trying to find out more about this. What chemicals will be used and how much will be left in the ground?
8. **Link to existing permits:** Does the proposal match the previous Environment Agency permit? Given that Cuadrilla have withdrawn their application for radioactive permits in Lancashire what does this mean for the Balcombe permits?
9. **Appraisal:** The application has moved on from exploration to include appraisal as well. What does this mean?

## **FFBRA's Leaflet Regarding the Upcoming BPC Poll**

FFBRA sent a leaflet regarding the upcoming poll to hundreds of Balcombe residents this week. We have received 4 complaints about it. We would welcome any comments from members on it and also any ideas as to the best way to communicate with the village.

## **Results of our Emergency Fundraising Appeal**

Our fund is growing rapidly and we nearly have enough for our professional planning consultant. Thank you so much for your contributions. Swift response from the community has meant we have been able to commission him to commence the first part of his work which is to study Cuadrilla's planning documents and to present his findings and suggested strategy to the FFBRA committee next week.

## **FUTURE EVENTS**

### **In Balcombe**

#### **Cuadrilla's Planning Application is Live**

The new application from Cuadrilla is now live and can be found on <http://buildings.westsussex.gov.uk/ePlanningOPS/loadFullDetails.do?apId=1634>

The public consultation period is until 13 March 2014.

Their application is described as being for “temporary permission for exploration and appraisal comprising the flow testing and monitoring of the existing hydrocarbon lateral borehole along with site security fencing, the provision of an enclosed testing flare and site restoration”.

### **Cuppa and a Catch Up at the Half Moon Pub, Balcombe**

Thursday 6 February, 10.30 am at the Half Moon Pub, informal meeting to chat about the new planning application over a cup of tea or coffee. A set of planning documents will be available for you to look at. All welcome - members and non-members.

### **Sussex Singers, Romanza, St Mary’s Church, Balcombe**

Saturday 15 Feb, 7 pm

Nothing to do with fracking but many of our members love this music so here are the details of this fabulous event in Balcombe. Favourite romantic songs from Elgar, Jerome Kern, Gershwin, Rutter, Vaughan Williams sung by the Sussex Singers. Tickets are £9 in advance (£10 at the door).and are available from “Threads” in Balcombe or Keith Savage on 01444 451248 or [www.newssussexsingers.org.uk](http://www.newssussexsingers.org.uk)

### **FFBRA Information Day, Bramble Hall, Sunday 16 February**

Our next FFBRA meeting will be Sunday 16 February at Bramble Hall, Bramble Hill, Balcombe, RH17 6HR 11 am till 1 pm and will be a Coffee Stop / Exhibition. There will be tea, coffee, cakes and children’s play area. Please come along and do feel free to bring along non-members. **We will have information on display about Cuadrilla’s planning application and how to object it.** This will be the first time we have held the meeting on a Sunday and we hope it will be successful.

### **Beyond Balcombe**

**Friends of the Earth Mid Sussex, Meeting, Haywards Heath, Monday 3 February.** This is a newly formed FOE group for Mid Sussex and one of its members has graciously offered to host this meeting next Monday 7.30 pm in her home. If you would like to come along and meet like- minded people, please could you call Anna on 077 5771 4069 ASAP so they have an idea of numbers. The house is a short walk from Haywards Heath station for those of you coming by train.

### **Wealden Against Fracking, Information Meetings**

A newly formed anti-fracking group is hosting a series of public meetings in the Tunbridge Wells area. Films and talk including guest speakers

Saturday 8th Feb at Mayfield Convent TN20 6PH (guest speaker Beki Adams, born in Cuckfield, owner of a farm on the South Downs who recently spoke at the House of Commons, APPG Unconventional Oil and Gas)

Saturday 15th Feb at Five at Ashes Village Hall TN20 6JA (guest speaker Charles Metcalfe, Balcombe resident)

Saturday 22nd Feb at Colkins Mill Church TN20 6BT (guest speaker Sue Taylor, Balcombe resident)

**Our MP, Francis Maude will be holding a Drop In Surgery on Friday, 7 February between 5 and 6pm at Gough House, Madeira Avenue, Horsham RH12 1AB**

A drop in surgery for any of his constituents. There is no need to book. You can expect to be given a 10 minute slot to talk to him about your concerns or ask questions Cuadrilla's planning application, the planning process, recent changes to government legislation (or anything else). These surgeries are held monthly and the subsequent one will be on 14 March.

**Public Information Evening about Fracking Thursday 13 February at 7.30 pm in the Assembly Room, The Council House, North Street, Chichester PO19 1LQ.**

The meeting will be chaired by Cllr Michael Woolley, former Mayor of Chichester.

There will be several short presentations from:

- Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive
- Claire Potts, Minerals and Waste Lead, from South Downs National Park Authority
- Mike Elkington, Strategic Planning Manager from West Sussex County Council
- Keith Taylor, MEP for South East Region
- Tony Bosworth Energy Campaigner, Friends of the Earth

After the presentations, there will be an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions. Please could you let your friends/colleagues/members know about this event, particularly any who live in Chichester or surrounding area.

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