

COMMENTS ON CASE (Online Version)

Please note that comments about this case need to be made within the timetable for it. This can be found in the notification letter sent out by the local planning authority or the start date letter for it.

Comments submitted after the deadline may be considered invalid and returned to sender.

DETAILS OF THE CASE

Case Reference: **APP/H6955/A/14/2218276**

Address of site Part of Field West of Commonwood Farm
and South of Borrass Road
Commonwood, Holt
Wrexham

Postcode

LL13 9TF

Grid Reference: Easting

3373620

Northing

3534910

SENDER DETAILS

Name

Mr Luke Ashley

Acting On Behalf Of

N/A

ABOUT YOUR COMMENTS

In what capacity do you wish to make representations on this case? Interested Party / Person

What kind of representation are you making? Interested Party/Person Correspondence

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE CASE

Please provide your representation below.

I'm not an environmentalist, eco-warrior, left winger or Green Party member.
I'm a very well informed and ordinary concerned citizen using knowledge and wisdom for the benefit of future generations.
I'm also an ex North Sea drill crew worker with several years experience in the industry.

I'm the page creator of N.E. Wales Anti-Fracking Action Network (NEWAFAN) based in Borrass, Wrexham, North East Wales, where I've lived for the last 20 years.
I created the facebook page to not only let local residents know about the new planning application that was lodged on the 20th September with WCBC by GP Energy who propose to drill an exploration well to test for gas content within the coal seams below the Borrass Head area of Wrexham, but also to try and PROPERLY inform people about the impacts and implications that surround exploitation of unconventional gas resources should this planning and future applications be approved.
Four years ago, while doing some unrelated on-line research, I stumbled upon the news headline,

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE CASE (Continued)

"Onshore drilling about to hit UK shores from America". Being an ex North Sea drill crew worker back in the mid 80's where I gained about seven years experience working with several different companies on various types of exploration rigs and production platforms, I became quite excited about the fact that I could be working on a land rig nearer to home. I found out quite quickly that there were Petroleum Exploration and Development License (PEDL) blocks stretching from Wrexham to Chester which at that time, Composite Energy held but who are now owned by Dart Energy of which GP Energy are a subsidiary of.

It was starting to feel like a dream come true for me. I could have done with some highly paid work once again to pay off my debts and to help me achieve my ambitions of buying a smallholding to live a self sufficient way of life for the rest of my years. But there was one thing I needed to read up more about if I was to have any success in landing that dream job. These drilling plans included a process I was not familiar with, 'Hydraulic Fracturing'. But for the following weeks that turned into months, my google researching into this new process kept on turning up the word 'Controversial'. The more I looked, trying to convince myself there was nothing to be concerned about, (I REALLY wanted that job) the more difficult it became to ignore the possibility that I may be applying for work that could potentially destroy the countryside and very life I was dreaming about setting up for myself (and family) in my later years and into retirement.

Being a Facebook user and having some 1000 odd like-minded friends all over the world, I set about making enquiries. My first port of call was America, the birth place of Fracking. Within literally minutes of my initial enquiries, I was able to chat with people who were being directly impacted by the onslaught of the shale gas rush across many parts of America. I was hearing first hand accounts of water contamination, land grabs, industrialisation of the countryside, illegal dumping of toxic frack waste-water into rivers and road verges, drilling rig blow-outs, fires and explosions, people and animals falling sick near drilling sites, increase in noisy heavy goods vehicles tearing up quiet country roads, gas leaks, noise and air pollution coming from drill sites and compressor stations, trenches being dug across farmlands for the new pipelines, health complaints from communities living near silica sand mines, (silica sand is used to mix with water and chemicals to pump at high pressure into the newly fractured rock formations) , aquifers quickly depleting due to the high demand of fresh water by the fracking companies, radiation alarm systems going off at landfill and waste water treatment sites due to the high levels of Radium 226 found in the drill cuttings and returned fracking fluid,.....

I could go on and on but just wanted to highlight some of the main concerns people are having in America. After a little more digging I realised all this was happening due to the very poor regulations in the US. Regulations that were especially adapted to exclude the clean air and water acts. Regulations that allowed a loophole that enabled the fracking companies to keep secret the chemicals they were using to pump into the ground to shatter it.

But things would be better here in the UK, I thought. Having worked in the North Sea, I was often told by supervisors that the UK had one of the most heavily regulated oil and gas industries in the world. Most of my work mates disagreed and so did I on many occasions, which is probably why safety representatives were introduced into the industry during my career, one of which was me.

So I set about looking into what regulations were in place regarding onshore drilling and was shocked to find that the same rules and regulations applied for onshore as they did offshore and with no recommendations or guidance notes relating to hydraulic fracturing. In fact I found the two pages worth of regulations that were supposedly for onshore exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons to be very poorly and hastily written, totally inadequate and not worth the paper they were written on due to the fact that in reality, drilling companies were given the power to regulate themselves under the guidance from DECC and the Environment Agency.

So this led me to investigate how well these companies carry out self regulation and in particular, Dart Energy, as they were the ones likely to be drilling in the North East Wales area. To do this, I had to travel (via facebook) to Australia where Dart were heavily involved with coal bed methane exploration and extraction. Again, I was faced with very disturbing stories of much the same impacts and concerns that the Americans were faced with and that a rapidly growing and well informed movement of concerned citizens were taking action against the likes of Dart which has recently resulted in the Australian Government toughening up the regulations, forcing Dart to sell off their Australian assets to focus on their UK portfolio where, due to our extremist right wing politicians in power, drilling companies have been given tax incentives, watered down regulations, and may also enjoy increased acreage by way of

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE CASE (Continued)

the 14th Licensing round which is scheduled to be announced later this year. If our Government could have their way, they would like to include shale gas and CBM exploitation into the Infrastructure Bill thus enabling them to ensure the frackers have the right to drill anywhere they like throughout England, Scotland, N.Ireland and Wales without the consent of local council planners or the communities they work for.

Once you have done as much research as I have, you begin to realise that certain key figures in Government have financial interests in the energy sector, especially the fossil fuel industry and you can start to connect the dots between Banks, Pension funds, investment companies and Politicians.

At the end of the day, the `Dash for Gas` is actually a dash for cash and geopolitical advantages and if you've done your homework properly, all roads lead back to Central Government.

I've been researching fracking and the much wider picture for 4 years now and needless to say, I have no intention of EVER looking for future employment within the industry.

My research has led me to the conclusion that no amount of science or robustness of a regulatory regime can prove fracking is safe or ensure the level of safety now or in the future. NOBODY can predict that human error or machine and equipment failure will not occur. But history tells us that the hydrocarbon extraction industry experiences human error and equipment failure on a daily basis resulting in serious injuries and fatalities along with catastrophic environmental damages. In light of this knowledge, and the fact that fracking gone wrong can cause irreversible damage to, aquifers, soil, air quality and the climate, that affect the majority, the long-term impacts that surround the shale and coal bed methane extraction industries outweigh, * BY FAR*, the short term economic advantages to be gained by a select few. Neither can anybody predict whether natural events such as earthquakes, ground movements or build up in formation pressures will or will not occur during drilling, production or long after plug and abandonment that can impact on the integrity of a well.

As a Welsh citizen, I for one, am strongly opposed to foreign companies, funded by foreign investors, taking advantage of tax incentives and inadequate regulations provided by our corrupt political leaders, in order to plunder Welsh resources which severely impact the health and well-being of local communities, industrialising our countryside and putting at risk our water supplies, soils, environment and eco systems, air quality and livelihoods while expecting us to pay more for our energy.

But that's only because i've taken the time to do my OWN research. And by the way, I'm not an environmentalist, eco-warrior, Green Party member, conspiracy theorist or affiliated with any NGO's like Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth. I'm just an ordinary concerned, (^and connected^) and now well informed citizen who in light of all the research I have done, feels compelled to properly inform others who may be in the firing line.

Central Government are doing all they can to try and push through this dash for gas. They are, as I speak, trying to overhaul the Trespass laws to make it easier for drilling companies to drill on your land or under your property without asking for permission first. Cameron has also visited Europe recently to block proposals by the European Commission for a new framework directive, which could take years to negotiate, in order to regulate the pollution risks of "unconventional" fuels, including shale gas and which would make it compulsory that Environmental Impact Assessments be carried out at all stages of exploration and production of onshore unconventional hydrocarbons in the UK. But this would make it too expensive to explore and extract at today's gas prices, turning investors away to other countries and is the sole reason Cameron has blocked the proposals.

And by the way, I mention exploration wells. This is a cloak term used by the industry as it is already well known where the gas is, but the investors need to know how much gas can be technically extracted over a 20 to 30 year period before they commit to investing in the production phase and cost of setting up the infrastructure. The Government are advising Council leaders and planners to consider these `exploration` wells on their own merits. i.e Simply drilling an exploration well, taking a core sample, plugging it and putting the site back to its original state. This is a bold attempt at diverting the public away from the REAL reason for these initial wells so that we are unable to object about what will be coming next.

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE CASE (Continued)

Once you allow them the opportunity to drill these wells, they have their foot jammed in the door and as is being seen elsewhere around the country, they simply apply for an extension to their planning permission and/or apply for all out production.

All I ask for the UK public to do is to push them back and allow yourselves the time to properly assess the impacts by learning from people such as myself and the many other well informed people who are setting up 'awareness' groups and to do your own research before allowing something which you may later regret or that your children and grandchildren wished you had put a stop to. Ask your local Council leaders to impose a moratorium until more is known by way of peer reviewed studies rather than the industry's own research and to give local communities the chance to decide for themselves rather than having this forced upon us by central Government.