

Preston New Road Action Group

Community Impacts of potential Shale Gas Exploration

**Input into APPG meeting scheduled for 8th November 2016
to cover the subject of Communities**

Background

The Preston New Road Action Group was formed following Cuadrilla's announcement that it was going to apply for planning permission for a Shale Gas Exploration Site at Preston New Road, Little Plumpton, Lancashire.

We sought to research and understand more about the process of fracking gaining an understanding of both the benefits and any dis-benefits. The proposed fracking or shale gas exploration site was planned very near to local residences (less than 300m). The more we found out about the industry the more concerned we got regarding the impacts it would have on the day to day lives of the residents in the surrounding community.

We believe that shale gas exploration at the proposed site will unacceptably adversely affect our community. If it is possible to make a process safe and not impact the environment, the health, the amenity and economic life choices of a community, then there would be no need for compensation. Given that a compensation scheme is currently being considered for local residents, it must therefore be being recognised that there will be significant impact on them.

Community Impacts

There are many concerns raised over many different aspects, but at a high level these are some of the most significant issues that it is felt will affect our local community.

Health

Recently much peer reviewed evidence has emerged proving adverse health impacts associated with the fracking industry. Medact have created a number of reports highlighting their concerns and issues <http://www.medact.org/resources/reports/dash-gas-updated-notes-public-health-impacts-shale-gas/>

Lancashire county council commissioned a Health Impact assessment which made over 60 recommendations many of which have still not been implemented. Given the elderly demographic of our community any industry that impacts on health is a major concern. It will also put added strain on our already over stretched local NHS services

Even before any planning permission has been granted our community has been under much stress. We have had to participate in the planning process and subsequently a public inquiry which has meant the need for much research and knowledge gathering. The time and effort required to do this has taken its toll on the health of many of our local residents. This observation is also backed up in the report "THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF SHALE GAS DEVELOPMENTS IN LANCASHIRE, UK" to be found at <http://repowerdemocracy.net/report> produced by Dr Anna Szolucha of the Department of Social Anthropology University of Bergen, Norway

The Faculty of Public Health (FPH) has urged the government to reverse its approval for fracking at Preston New Road. Professor Middleton has stated: "The precise level of risk to human health from fracking cannot be calculated". See http://www.fph.org.uk/government_gives_green_light_for_fracking_-_and_for_serious_public_health_and_environmental_risks for the whole report

Homes

The demographic of our community has a higher proportion of elderly residents than the UK average as people choose to live in a more rural landscape for their retirement years, but with still good access to amenities and services. Many of the elderly residents are frightened about the impacts that fracking will have on their environment and quality of lives, but they are unable to move as houses are just not selling, as no one wants to buy a house close to a proposed fracking site. This has severely restricted the life choices that local people are able to make and added to the stress that they are undergoing. People fear that the largest investments that they have made in their lives, their homes, are becoming worthless. No industrial site of this nature should be allowed so close to people's homes (less than 300m in some cases).

The application although only temporary is for a minimum of six years which could be the rest of many of the elderly resident's lives. If exploration is successful then the site could potentially move into production which will then mean that it will be an industrial site for in excess of 20 years. These timescales are not temporary in the eyes of most people. It could mean that people are trapped living in an environment where they no longer wish to be in coping with issues that they cannot get away from.

Traffic

The A583 on which the proposed site is situated is already a busy main road, the increase in traffic to the site will have a significant impact both from a quantity and size point of view. There are bus stops located close to the site which will become dangerous to use. The residents at Carr Bridge Park home site (over 300 residents all over the age of 60) will have difficulty crossing the road to use the bus (for many of them their only means of transport), this will mean that they will become trapped in their own homes. Other road users such as cyclists and horse riders will have far more large vehicles passing them at speed which will make their journeys far more dangerous. The increased noise and fumes from the increased traffic will also further impact on the health and well being of the local community.

Seismicity

The proposed Preston New Road site is situated near to a number of known fault lines. The proposed traffic light monitoring system will not stop a seismic event once it has started, it will just provide an indication that it is happening. There is significant evidence from the USA of a large increase in the number of earthquakes due to fracking, especially where reinjection techniques are used which is also being proposed here. The Netherlands also have evidence of much structural damage caused to properties in the Groningen area where fracking has taken place. Again this of major concern to local residents, they are worried about any structural damage being caused to their properties, and their ability to get insurance cover should fracking go ahead.

Pollution

Carr Bridge Brook runs right through the field where the site is proposed, there are also many ponds and dykes scattered around the area. Carr bridge brook eventually runs into the River Ribble. The fields around the area are low lying and prone to flooding. Any leakage of pollutants into this water will be a threat to the agricultural industry, health of local people and the wildlife of the area which includes many wintering birds. Any pollution of the water or land puts at risk our local agricultural industry as no one will be able to guarantee that there is no contamination within the food chain.

The proposed development will include some emissions to the atmosphere that will affect air quality. These emissions will come from flaring, the operation of generators and vehicles transporting materials and waste to and from the site. The largest source of emissions will be the operation of the flare during the 90 day well monitoring period. Emissions from the site are likely to include methane, nitrogen oxides and some fine particulate matter. If there are significant levels of sulphur in the gas, then emissions of sulphur dioxide would also occur. There may also be emissions of unburned gas to the atmosphere as a result of leakage and fugitive emissions. There is also the potential for odour impacts. Again this will have an impact on the health and well being of the local community. People may have to change their daily routines not wanting to be outside for fear of what they could be breathing in.

Noise, light and vibration

The proposed Preston New Road site is in a rural location and at night is extremely quiet with very little traffic or other background noise. This was evidenced by a 5 week noise monitoring exercise that we undertook prior to the Inquiry to demonstrate the impact that the proposed site would have.

The 24x7 noise from the proposed site will have a significant impact on the local residents. Noise experts have stated that it will cause sleep deprivation again impacting on health and quality of life.

The light from the proposed site will also have significant impact on what is a very dark area. This will have an impact on the community and wildlife of the area. It will completely change the night time landscape that is currently enjoyed by our community.

The proposed site will also cause a certain amount of vibration which will be a further source of annoyance to local people and potential damage to their properties.

Regulations

It is often quoted that the UK has gold standard regulations but the evidence does not support that, as many of the Royal Academy / Royal Society recommendations made in 2012 have yet to be implemented. <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/shale-gas-extraction/report/>

People

Already the proposal is causing division among the community. People who stand to gain from it, are now at odds with those who are worried about the impacts that it could have on their lives, should it be allowed to go ahead.

There is a claim that many jobs will be created should this proposal be allowed to go ahead, but neither, the planning application which states that 11 FTE jobs will be created, nor evidence from other countries backs this up.

There are a number of schools within the area including a primary school which is less than 1 mile downwind of the proposed site, children playing in the playground will be exposed to any air pollution caused by it.

Conversely local jobs are at risk especially as this is a farming and tourism area. A fracking site could potentially damage both of these industries causing a loss of jobs which we suspect would be far greater than 11.

Safety

Monitoring will take place at the site, but most of it will be done by the operator in which there is a lack of trust as it is viewed as self regulation. People worry as to how conditions will be enforced should the site be allowed to go ahead.

Who will monitor the infrastructure once Cuadrilla has left? It is a recognised fact that all wells leak over time thus giving further concern to the pollution / contamination of the ground and air.

What will happen if there is a major disaster at the site? Again the people living close to the proposed site are concerned about the potential impacts on their health and homes.

The A583 is also a key route for the emergency services, if it gets busier due to the increase in traffic and congestion occurs, this could also delays for these services prohibiting them being able to deal with emergencies in the appropriate timescales, thus, putting the lives of local residents at risk.

Summary

Due to the many issues as outlined above and the many other outstanding questions and issues, it is felt that a Shale Gas exploration site at Preston New Road, Little Plumpton would have a massively detrimental effect on the local community.