

Community Impacts of Prospective Shale Gas Exploration

Reflections and feedback from a community directly affected

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By Barbara Richardson on behalf of Roseacre Awareness Group

barbara.martin@talk21.com

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1. Introduction

This document has been produced to provide feedback to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Shale Gas Regulations about the impact such an industry has already had, and will continue to have, on local communities who will be directly affected. This document is intended for consideration at the next meeting, due to be held on 20th July 2016, looking specifically at Communities.

As one of the two communities in Lancashire which could be directly impacted by the plans submitted by Cuadrilla Resources to drill, and hydraulically fracture, up to 4 exploratory shale gas wells at Roseacre Wood, we felt it important to let the committee have our feedback on the process to date and our concerns over the future.

Roseacre Wood is a greenfield site located in the very heart of the rural Fylde in Lancashire, midway between two small villages of Roseacre and Wharles, and just 200m from several properties. Both villages are situated within 1km of the proposed site. Both the proposed Lancashire sites are only a few kilometres from the only well to have been fracked using the high volume, high intensity (iHVHF) hydraulically fracturing process in the UK where previous seismic events were triggered in 2011.(Preese Hall)

The Roseacre Awareness Group (RAG) represents several hundred residents who have spent a great deal of time researching both the industry in general and the specifics of the applications at the sites proposed. Originally dedicated to intelligent awareness and close scrutiny, RAG went on to voice its implacable opposition to the proposal at Roseacre Wood which was later vindicated by the Planning Officer and the Development Control Committee at Lancashire County Council. Observers at the recent Public Inquiry further endorsed the strength of the case presented by us to the Inspector and the weakness (and exposure) of that presented by the company.

We are surprised and disappointed that our views have not previously been sought as we have been unwillingly engaged in the community liaison/engagement and planning process for the past two and a half years. Scant regard was given to comments made to Lord Smith (including comments about his report) which inaccurately portrayed legitimate concerns to be based on clumsy communication or lack of understanding by those in the community. Whilst the former is accurate (and rather more fault ridden than “clumsy”) the latter is patronising and wholly inappropriate and in no way reflects the status of those who opposed the development.

Unfortunately we have not had much time, nor indeed had the resources, to produce an all-encompassing report for your consideration. However we felt it important to provide some feedback at least from our experiences to date. We hope this will be discussed at the meeting on 20th July.

We would welcome the opportunity to make personal representations at any future meetings recognising the inherent difficulties for us in attending Westminster, but would also provide further information and evidence should you require it or answer specific questions arising.

We have made numerous attempts to engage with various politicians involved in Energy Policy, including the Rt Hon. Amber Rudd, Andrea Leadsom and Greg Clark, but we have not been successful; our invitations have been declined. Our own MP, the Rt Hon, Mark Menzies, has met

with us several times to discuss our issues and made various representations in Westminster on our behalf, most recently to the Planning Inspector at the Public Inquiry in Blackpool. We are therefore pleased that he is a member of the APPG and can represent us.

However, the overwhelming feeling still remains that we are not being listened to and are routinely characterised as scaremongers, nimbies, ill-informed or easily influenced by other parties. We can assure you this is far from the truth. Our members are well educated, well informed and genuinely concerned; the evidence for which should be apparent in the weight given to the case which RAG has submitted at every level of the Planning Process up to and including the Public Inquiry. Despite this, we feel that both our expertise and our voice are afforded less respect than is appropriate or given to others. This has been an opportunity lost to both the industry and Government and is not in the national, still less local communities', best interests.

The following sections explain our main issues and concerns which we wish to present to the APPG.

2. Having a Say?

The only effective way we have been able to engage in the process is via the local authority planning system and this has been far from satisfactory. Communities have had to become experts not only in the planning process but also in environmental and health issues. It has cost us much time, effort and money to make appropriate representations opposing an industry which has considerable resources at its disposal. The result is a community suffering from considerable stress and anxiety. It is not appropriate for this to be dismissed as the natural consequence of either ignorance or delay, as Cuadrilla has done; a characteristic diminution of legitimate issues.

a) Stress caused by engaging in the planning process

Resident groups have had to spend many thousands of hours understanding the planning process, reading the applicant's 4,000 page Environmental Statement (identifying the many omissions and errors contained therein) and other technical documents produced by the applicant and other consultees and then registering their own objections. This included having to understand the Local Borough plan, Joint Minerals and Waste Plans and the NPPF itself. Whilst this might be acknowledged as necessary, it such be recognised as both burdensome and endowing those willing to accept such a burden with the right to some respect.

Our speakers at the Fylde Borough and LCC planning meetings and the subsequent Public Inquiry were under strict time constraints. The initial vindication at the decision to refuse planning permission at Roseacre Wood was replaced by trepidation as Cuadrilla appealed. At this juncture, the company's public commitment to securing social licence for its proposals and to allowing the application to be assessed transparently by the appropriate body disappeared.

Resident groups and local parish councils had to apply for Rule 6 status in order to have a say in the proceedings and the consequent Public Inquiry . Although we welcomed the public scrutiny and the chance to challenge and expose the "independent" and "robust" technical evidence of the Appellant , it took hundreds of hours in researching and preparing documentation, securing expert witnesses (none of whom committed to support the RAG case unless and until they had reviewed that of the Appellant and reached objective conclusions) and meeting the demands of the quasi -judicial proceedings. Counsel was provided pro bono or we should not have had any. The local community

had to raise tens of thousands of pounds to present technical evidence on various aspects including noise, landscape and visual impact, traffic and road safety, community recreation and amenity. This also caused considerable stress and anxiety. *RAG's success in so doing is testimony to the credibility of the group, the integrity of its leaders and the weight of its arguments.*

Over one hundred people requested to speak in opposition to Cuadrilla's plans. The speakers were faced by a QC, employed by Cuadrilla, at the Public Inquiry and the combination of these pressures led to at least ten people breaking down giving their testimony. Others were visibly upset but all were determined to speak. Many presentations were rooted in factual detail, intimate local knowledge or professional insight. Many represented groups of interested parties upon whom the impact of the development would fall heavily: for example those who lived along the proposed routes, those who used the area as a valued amenity and those who had businesses threatened by the proposal.

b) Health effects of community involvement

A local Councillor reported that in all her years as Councillor she had never been contacted by so many people. Over 13,000 people wrote objections, many of which were very detailed and specific. Councillors were approached about the level of stress in the community which emanated from a sense of powerlessness and a feeling of disconnection of people from politicians. It is this sense of disconnect and dismissal (as much as the inherent nature of the development) which has led to many local residents consulting their GPs and being diagnosed with stress related illnesses.

It has been documented by Dr William Bird MBE and others that stress causes a build up of visceral fat which causes immense damage to the body. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in the body. It can raise blood pressure, suppress the immune system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contribute to infertility, and speed up the aging process.

c) 'Mental anguish' caused by the attitude of the company and the authorities

Cuadrilla have no 'social license' despite numerous attempts to pacify the local residents. Over 90% of local residents still oppose the plans.

The company has employed PR consultants but residents attending their roadshows /information sessions felt questions were ignored, fobbed off or dismissed by people who did not understand the fracking process or the specific application and were determined to spin. (see below Community Engagement). Given the level of expertise in the community this added to frustration and the overwhelming impression of ritual dance. This sense of futility is common in case histories relating to stress and anxiety: working hard or tackling problems does not cause stress, working hard, tackling problems but having no impact does.

A further sense of alienation resulted from Cuadrilla's security firm. Men were employed in large numbers in the local fields, approached vehicles, approached children playing in the woods, patrolled in dark fields in vehicles at night and brought a sense of menace which led villagers to feel intimidated.

At a local level Cuadrilla established a Community Liaison Group (CLG), with representatives from the local community including the parish council, local businesses and residents. Despite many months of meetings the company still failed to alleviate residents' concerns or reassure them. regular meetings occurred but amendments were often cosmetic and Cuadrilla was capricious in what is agreed to. Noise was a clear example with mitigation measures absent entirely at first

(despite a commitment to best practice), then offered and then abandoned as unnecessary. When it saw fit, and despite protestations from all non-industry members, the CLG was terminated.

It was felt this was just a tick box exercise to meet their obligations to consult with residents. The sense of ritual dance continued and has continued with a further mailshot in place of dialogue.

The length of time, *resultant on the deferral request made by the company at the original Planning Application hearings in January 2015*, and exacerbated by the Appeal by the company, has caused unprecedented stress. Worse is feared: the report by the Director of Public Health (Lancashire) concluded that the development would have unavoidable impacts on public health and made a series of recommendations. No progress has been made in addressing the findings or the recommendations with the inevitable consequences of increased disillusion, anger and anxiety.

3. Community Impacts

There are many concerns over many different aspects but these are some of the most significant which remain unresolved.

a) Death of Communities /Property Prices

This is a relatively affluent area which attracts retired professionals and young families who have paid a premium to live here for the peace and tranquility the area affords. There is a very strong community spirit with many community events taking place. People enjoy their local environment and spend many hours using the fields and lanes for recreation.

However the very threat of fracking has completely changed this and many residents fear that their way of life will change should fracking go ahead. Many residents now want to move away as they do not want to live near a 24x7 industrial fracking site which, despite industry assertions is hardly likely to attract purchasers as a rural location has done hitherto. Houses have failed to sell, or been sold at vastly inferior prices. This is merely due to the very 'prospect' of fracking as no decisions have yet been made.

If people who want to cannot move out, and no-one wants to move in, the community will effectively wither and die. Young families, for whom it is an investment in quality of life as much as bricks and mortar, are impervious to industry assurances that it is short term (six years) and tolerable. They find neither compelling. Those already resident will leave, even at a loss (as was stated at the Inquiry). Any real cognisance of these concerns by the company could and should have influenced proposed site locations: given the nature of the process no site needs to be within 2k of residents, still less 200 or 300m. from residents.

Further, despite assurances that this is only short term, a moot point for six years.....an entire primary school life for a child, Cuadrilla have already admitted they would want to move to production (if they find significant reserves of shale gas) which would significantly affect the timescales (possibly 20-30 years). Many of our elderly residents are unlikely to outlive the works.

Elderly residents, already vulnerable to the concomitant challenges of age, will add this to those challenges with the consequent impact on health and wellbeing.

Cuadrilla were approached by the parish council to reassure residents by implementing a property underpinning scheme. This would have allowed residents to sell their houses without loss to the company who could sell on. Cuadrilla would not entertain the scheme yet they insist property prices will not be affected! Evidence that they already have been has been met with a far from satisfactory response rather than an acceptance of the common sense alternative that no-one wants

to live near a fracking site. Cuadrilla produced evidence at the Public Inquiry that house prices had been unaffected by their operations in the Fylde since 1992. As the APPG will know, the only previous fracking of the kind proposed occurred in 2011, after which there was a moratorium, followed by few concerns until the applications at Roseacre Wood (and Little Plumpton) were submitted. Again, this serves to illustrate what is seen as a miasma of mis-information against which knowledgeable community representatives have neither the platform nor the resources to prevail. In those circumstances (as has been seen very recently) people become demoralised, disengaged and desperate.

Many residents feel 'trapped' producing even more stress and anxiety. Although property prices are not a material planning consideration residents are astute in their assessment and the industry is careless of the wider economic impacts which its presence will have. It makes little economic sense to needlessly devalue agricultural areas and valuable property.

b) Fear of environmental impacts on health

Much research has led to many people's awareness of evidence of harm from overseas which cannot be discounted. It needs to be looked into by an independent body. The PHE report was limited, is now very dated and does not reassure residents as much peer reviewed evidence has emerged proving adverse health impacts associated with the fracking industry.

Claims that the UK has far more robust regulations is not accepted. Many of the RA/RS regulations have yet to be implemented. This is a new onshore unconventional fossil fuel industry with proven risks which cannot be mitigated. There is no evidence that the UK is better at regulation.

Despite residents' concerns there are no plans for baseline health monitoring.

Again, it behoves Government to address concerns and be wise before the event. The Group would do well to consult the Chief Scientific Officer's Report (2014) Managing risk, not avoiding it and to give full weight to consideration of disasters in other "well regulated" regimes: the BSE crisis is an excellent example where an adjustment in required temperature had disastrous consequences resulting in billions of pounds worth of harm.

c) Traffic and Road Safety

This area gave concerns to all experts which could not be assuaged. Only Cuadrilla's consultants dismissed the issue.

Lancashire County Council consistently advised Cuadrilla, in the spirit of problem solving pre application, that there were inherent and insurmountable public safety issues related to the proposed site. The Highways Authority, the Planning Officer and the Development Control Committee could not reconcile any of the company's proposals or so called mitigations with the basic requirements of safe planning practice. The company refused invitations to drive the routes in six axle OGVs of the type proposed and relied on manipulation of road usage surveys (exposed at the Public Inquiry) for obfuscation.

It is little wonder that in these circumstances residents and other road users (agricultural, business and recreational) remain fearful.

d) Water and air pollution

This area of the Fylde is strewn with ponds, brooks and low lying fields. Flooding is endemic. The threat to water, to the dairy industry and to wider health remains an unexplored area of concern which should be addressed as a matter of urgency. rebuttal is the industry preference (for example about flooding) despite overwhelming evidence .

There is no independent scientific review of emerging evidence.

d) Noise and light

The Roseacre Wood site is rural and remains tranquil and undisturbed. This much was acknowledged by Cuadrilla. Many thousands of tourists and leisure users use the area due to its relatively flat topography and picturesque scenery commanding 360 views over the Bowland Fells, Lake District and Fylde coast. This was refuted by Cuadrilla which asserted that the amenity value of the area was low. This was utterly discredited at the Inquiry.

The 24x7 noise and light will have significant impact on what is essentially a very quiet area with very low background noise levels and a 'dark sky' community.

This could have knock on effects on the number of visitors and local businesses. The DEFRA report confirms there may be such impacts and the weight of evidence presented at the Public inquiry was overwhelming.

The collateral damage in environmental and economic terms should be an area of acute concern and no developments should be permitted without such consideration. the methodology of the assessments used by the "independent" consultants employed by Cuadrilla was the subject of ridicule by their peers at the Inquiry and is a wholly inadequate basis for site location.

e) Seismicity

Roseacre sits even closer to a fault line than the Preese Hall site (2011). The proposed traffic light system will not stop an event from occurring it is a post hoc indicator of seismic activity. There is also nothing to stop the baseline being pushed up to an even higher level than that already agreed.

There is significant evidence from the US especially from Ohio and Pennsylvania of a large increase in the number of earthquakes due to reinjection techniques. This is also being proposed here.

It is inappropriate to take nothing of use from experience and evidence elsewhere and to rely upon assertion and hypothesis.

f) Legacy

Who is responsible for monitoring long after the oil and gas companies move on? All wells leak over time not only methane but no one knows what will happen to the millions of gallons of fluid which remain under ground.

Evidence is emerging from the US on significant methane emissions from leaking wells and infrastructure, such as pipelines and compressor stations, which is impacting on global warming and is clearly at odds with climate change targets.

No financial arrangements such as bonds are required from the operators so any clean- up operations will be at the local authority's expense. The CLG discussed at length the financial robustness of companies established and there remains great concern. No reassurance could be given by the operator that there was any obligation on the part of Cuadrilla Resources to fund Cuadrilla Elswick whilst the farmer has reportedly set up a company for the well pad field but no other thus limiting his liability. All of which leaves interested parties with a sense of well founded

uncertainty and concern around the future costs and who will bear them, the suspicion being that it will not be the operator.

Climate Change targets/CCC report are not yet in the public domain which again creates mistrust. Informed opinion asks it has not been published when these very important decisions have yet to be made?

It is little wonder that DECC's own survey of pPublic Opinion reports rising levels of disquiet and consistently shows that opposition to the industry igrows in relation to enhanced knowledge of the industry.

g) Monitoring

This is effectively a self-regulating industry.

Most of the actual monitoring will be done by the operator in which local residents have no trust. Experience from Preese Hall is both relevant and chilling.

Residents feel they will be left to monitor their own health and environment. Who will ensure the many local authority conditions are being met? There is a clear difference between where the responsibility for monitoring lies and the practical application of that responsibility. residents are all too aware that ongoing monitoring will perforce be their responsibility until a major incident brings the full weight of retrospective analysis.

h) Local Businesses/Rural Economy

There would be a potentially disastrous effect particularly on camping and caravanning sites, cafes and tea rooms, farm shops, livery yards and riding stables, kennels, farriers, honey production businesses and others. In particular the farming and tourism industry is well established in this area and could potentially be adversely affected if the character of the area changes. All of this was rehearsed in detail at the Public Inquiry and remains an area in which the industry has habitually taken no interest. The cost to the nation of what economists refer to as "externalities" is real and local communities have become very aware of the ramifications.

i) Insurance

There is considerable concern about the implications for insurance for property, agriculture and business. The NFU had voiced concern as has the Landowners' Association. Legal proceedings are ongoing against Cuadrilla for damage resultant on its seismic testing (not fracking) and there is a concern that any or all of the various Cuadrilla entities can or will be wound up if and when it suits.

These concerns are of wide and significant importance.

Cuadrilla would not disclose to CLG the extent of its insurance cover (see Section f above).

j) Climate change impacts

It has been established that shale gas methane emissions are more damaging to the environment than coal despite the government's assurance that this fossil fuels extraction is cleaner than coal.

The Government has Climate Change targets and the Paris Conference was a seminal moment.

Again, the Government's own Chief Scientific Adviser has both cautionary and advisory words of huge relevance to the APPG. (2014 Report)

m) Safety in the Community, Infrastructure and services

This is a very rural community situated well away from any infrastructure services such as fire and ambulance. Accidents can and do happen such as well blowouts, gas escapes, spillages etc. There is much anxiety over how we would be protected and how emergency vehicles would reach us situated many miles from any major roads and only reached by narrow country lanes.

4. Inadequate Regulations

This is a new industry. Although fracking has taken place iHVHF hydraulic fracturing onshore has occurred only once in this country, at Preese Hall.

RS/RA recommendations not implemented.

There is unfortunately no confidence in the many disparate agencies who would oversee the industry namely DECC, EA, HSE, local authorities (County and Borough) including environmental health and highway maintenance and safety. It is not that they are unwilling but they are not experienced in this nascent unconventional, onshore iHVHF fracking industry, are under resourced and suffering from serious budget constraints and staff reductions.

Effectively this is self-regulating industry in which there is no trust, not least because there is a history of non-compliance with conditions and a cavalier attitude to planning permission and extensions thereto (thus maximising "short term" and "temporary" in planning applications.

There are no separation distances a) between sites or b) from residential properties. In some states in the US and Australia where communities are more scattered a more responsible approach has been adopted to protect homes and families. Although the risks are all the greater in this over-crowded country, no such safeguards have been considered. Had there been such guidance (see above) much of the contention could have been avoided but the industry does not recognise or take seriously its obligations to communities (as stated repeatedly). With the increasing pressure on land for house building addressing this issue is critical.

Andrea Leadsom has said that fracking will not take place near villages yet this site is just 300m from two villages.

5. Community Benefits (or lack of)

a) Community Benefit Fund

The industry is attempting to influence communities by promising community benefit payments of £100,000 per well (at this site) and 1% of production revenues. This is wholly unconvincing when residents are likely to lose substantial amounts off their principal lifetime investment (ie their home) or off their business.

Benefits are also intended for community projects which are not actually needed with applications for funding available to many parties. The money does not go directly to those affected as was described as a pre-requisite by the PM.

Benefits are all industry controlled and could be withdrawn.

Cuadrilla's proposals regarding the management of "benefits" to the Community Liaison Group were to use an independent company, i.e. Lancashire Fund. No compromise could be reached at CLG where local communities suffering greatest impact raised concerns and the discussions remained unfinished when Cuadrilla terminated the initiative (ie the community engagement via the CLG).

Communities regard the terminology (community benefit) as a distortion.

b) National Need

Much emphasis has been given to the contention that there is a national need for shale gas and a secure home grown energy source. However, we remain unconvinced and feel the timescales will not make this a transition and investment should be in renewables and energy efficiencies. This view is given weight in the Report mentioned in (J) above and in emerging developments about carbon capture and inward investment. Should Cuadrilla establish its exploratory site subsequent production might very well be offered elsewhere (ie *the operation will be sold on.....*see concerns above Section f with all the environmental cost which could follow. This is a view held in the oil industry.)

c) Jobs

The industry claims that significant jobs would ensue but the evidence does not back this up. Most jobs will be short lived and many of a specialist nature. Local jobs are at risk especially as this is a farming and tourism area. Again, the paucity of this case was demonstrated at the PI and speculation about benefits has varied wildly and, by common consent, been hugely inflated.

Summary

This whole process is one which has caused significant distress to local residents. Many have had to spend many hundreds of hours researching and making representations at planning meetings. Residents have had to become experts in planning and environmental matters to counter the weight of PR material, media access and central government pressure.

Cuadrilla's community engagement is seen as superficial with a consequent feeling that concerns and issues have been ignored. Reporting of engagement has been manipulated to best effect and has dubious accuracy. For example: community events have consisted of informal consultations with individuals (PR company, Cuadrilla representatives or Arup) during which no notes are taken. Statistics allegedly reflecting these individual discussions and concerns (including pie charts!) were produced and "responses" outlined. Those who attended these events are at a loss to know how the data was captured (at best it could only be impressionistic feedback from industry employees) and have been frustrated that no open Q&A has been facilitated (despite requests).

Despite the industry attempting to extol the benefits of shale gas extraction, assert that the regulations are robust and safe, assure that they can mitigate the many impacts to satisfactory levels, we remain wholly unconvinced on many levels and *for good reasons* (explored at the Public Inquiry).

Worse still, there is a widespread feeling that communities in which responsible and reflective citizens have actively engaged in a process at considerable personal cost are deemed irrelevant; belittled, demonised or ignored there is a dangerous and growing sense of disenfranchisement unhealthy in any democracy. We hope our experience and views will be taken into consideration and submit these in the hope that the APPG may be able to use our feedback to the benefit of all communities who may be faced with what we have been for the past two and a half years.

It is our hope and expectation that these representations are taken seriously at the APPG. We took seriously the Government's commitment to localism and have acted in good faith in the planning process. However, there is a genuine disillusion and indeed suspicion about the extent to which such processes have meaning.