Wressle Community Liaison Group

Meeting note

Date: Wednesday 3rd March 2021

Venue: Virtual MS Teams meeting

Attendees:

Community	
Coleen McGovern (CM)	Resident
Elizabeth Welch (EW)	Resident
Jeff Storey (JS)	Resident
Jessica Hardiment (JH)	Resident
Lee Jenkins (LJ)	Resident
Louise Hammond (LH)	Resident
Louise Price (LP)	Resident
Martin Hempstock (MH)	Resident
Sadie Simons (SS)	Resident
Terry Howe (TH)	Resident
Agencies	
Andrew Law (AL)	Planning, NLC
Helen Renshaw (HR)	Environment Agency
Howard Goulbourne (HG)	Environment Agency
Thomas Doherty-Montague (TDM)	Humberside Police
Councillors	
Carol Ross (CR)	Broughton Town Council
Paul Tattersfield (PT)	Broughton Town Council
Paul Senior (PS)	Broughton Town Council - mayor
Egdon representatives	
Mark Abbott (MA)	MD, Egdon Resources, Egdon
Martin Brooks (MB)	Operations director, Egdon

Martin Durham (MD)	Technical Director, Egdon
Paul Foster (PF)	Planning consultant
Rachel Smith (RS)	Community and communications

NOTE: the following is not a verbatim report of the meeting but intended to capture the principles of the questions asked and the salient points of issues discussed.

Welcome and introductions

MA welcomed the group and gave background on its formation.

RS outlined housekeeping.

MD told the group that the meeting was being recorded.

Introductions were made by all members.

Apologies

Sue Twilley

Election of chair and deputy

Martin Hempstock and Jeff Storey were nominated and seconded. They opted to co-chair the meetings.

Sharing of information

The group opted for email to be the main means of communication within the group. RS told the group she would need permission under GDPR to hold email addresses and agreement from all group members that their emails can be shared.

ACTION: RS to send email requesting permission. Members to respond.

Overview of the site operations to date

MA recapped on the planning permission process and the recent works onsite including the discharge of the planning conditions, reconstruction of the site, removal of stone and the installation of the HDPE membrane and drainage system. Stone has been re-laid and testing undertaken on the surface; bunds installed and an internal road and concrete plinth extension constructed. The surface water inceptor was installed.

New groundwater monitoring boreholes have been installed and baseline monitoring undertaken.

He told the meeting in January the workover rig had been mobilised to site and the perforations of the shallower reservoirs were cemented off and the cement seals tested. A new completion was installed in the well (new tubing and downhole equipment) for production from the Ashover Grit reservoir and the well casing has been reperforated to allow the oil to flow. Oil has been flowing since late January and is being removed from site and sent to the Phillips 66 Refinery on Humberside.

The next stage of the operation would be to undertake the proppant squeeze operation once we have permission from the OGA.

MH – How is governance for the site undertaken?

MA – This is all managed under a construction quality assurance scheme which was developed by Egdon and approved by the Environment Agency (EA) and involves testing and site visits.

MB added that the site reconfiguration was delivered under the quality assurance plan and was signed off by both the EA and North Lincolnshire Council (NLC). Regular site visits ensure that the site is built in accordance with the plans and adheres to the permits. The EA has oversight to ensure the site is built in line with the approved plans.

TH – Is NLC essentially the Clerk of Works making sure the work is done properly?

MB – It's technically the EA. The council defers to the EA as the technical experts and the EA will advise the council as to whether the works are in compliant.

TH – I read that you are now **not** injecting acids is that right?

MA – Yes, we will not be using the acidization process at the site.

TH – Drill or Drop seems to be a good source of information. Is it unbiased?

MA – It is a very good source of information. Bias often depends on where you sit in a discussion, but it does seem to have a slight anti-hydrocarbons bias. Drill or Drop is generally good journalism, well informed and up-to-date.

LH – Is there cash put aside if something goes wrong?

MA – Yes, as for all of our operations and activities we have insurance in place for public liability and well control of up to £10m in each case.

LH - Where does that money come from?

MA - It's insurance in the same way as you have car insurance. It's the same for the oil industry.

LH - So there is money put aside if something goes wrong?

MA - Yes like at all of our sites.

SS – What is the proppant squeeze timescale?

MB – There is not a firm timescale at this point. The application is being considered by the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) and the EA and we expect to hear in a number of weeks. It's then a couple of weeks to get it set up. The operation itself takes place over two days – one to two hours one day and two hours the next. No rig is involved.

If this is not successful then the next stage would be to drill a side track. We would need to get the rig approved in terms of noise and lighting from NLC in respect of the rig that would be onsite.

MD – Approval would also be required from the EA and OGA.

MH – Could a CLG member be on site while the proppant squeeze takes place?

MA – I don't see it being an issue, but there are safety aspects to be considered (in addition to COVID-19 restrictions) so I will have to check and come back to you on that. Both EA and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) would be on site.

ACTION – MA to check and revert.

LH – Why do the proppant squeeze if the oil is flowing?

MA – Brine (salt water) has been used in the wellbore and the salt reacts with the rock and this impairs the flow. We are flowing but not at the rate we would expect. The proppant squeeze will get us to the next level to produce more.

JH – How much oil has been produced so far?

MA – Because that's commercially sensitive I cannot say in this forum but it's similar to the test production phase.

TH – Who are Union Jack oil?

MA – All oil and gas operations tend to be joint ventures (JVs). Union Jack Oil plc is a UK oil company which is a JV partner, we also have Europa Oil and Gas plc. In terms of the JV for Wressle, Egdon owns 30% and are the operators, Europa have 30% and Union Jack have 40%.

TH – Is it financial or will they do something in the site?

MA – Purely financial. Egdon runs all the operations on site.

LJ – So if the proppant squeeze is not successful you would do the side track? What's the draft plan for the low pressure frack for then?

MA – The plan is still draft because the proppant squeeze operation is not agreed yet with the OGA.

TH – Some people are saying there is fracking at this site. Your operation uses 150 cubic m (of fluids) fracking uses 10,000 cubic m. This operation is nothing to do with fracking is it?

MA – Fracking, as most people know it, is a process where water is pushed under pressure into low porosity rocks to create fractures and allow the oil or gas (usually gas) to flow out. This is not the same operation, but we will be using water to clean the near borehole.

This operation is at one end of a very big spectrum of operations and it's at the very small end of that scale. Very small and very localised and used to deal with a very specific issue. This has been routinely done all over the world as a standard oil field practice for many years. It has not been routinely done in the UK since the 1980s.

LH – Will this be low volume, high pressure and cause the same issues as the earthquakes on Blackpool? What about the climate emergency?

RS reminded the group that its purpose was to discuss the operations of the site rather than to debate to oil and gas industry as a whole.

MA – There has not been a case where any form of seismic activity has been caused by this type of operation. Despite this we intend to operate under the OGA's 'Traffic Light System' where we monitor the seismic activity and, if there is any change, we would cease operations.

In reference to the question about climate emergency in reality oil and gas will still be in use for many decades to come. Oil is necessary for transport and will continue to be especially for aviation which is one area which is struggling to find alternatives and as a feedstock for plastic and manufacturing in industry. There will be a role for oil even with the net zero transition.

LH – will the public have access to the monitoring data?

MA – Yes I have no issues with that but it won't be in real time because the operation is over in just a few hours

LJ – This proppant squeeze has not been done since the 1980s, why?

MA – Because it is designed to deal with a very specific issue and that issue has not arisen, although there is a site nearby called Crosby Warren where this was undertaken in the 1980s. The level of drilling activity has also been much lower since the 1980s.

LJ – Which way will the side track be?

MA – It will follow the same track as the current well but will specifically target the Ashover Grit formation. It would be in a south westerly direction from the site.

LJ – Did you expect to have to do this proppant squeeze operation?

MA – No it was not one of the processes that we expected to have to undertake prior to drilling in 2014.

LJ – When this was done before the 1980s were there any issues?

MA – Not as far as we know either seismically or environmentally either in the UK or worldwide. We have undertaken a thorough review of the historical operations and part of that review was to research and look into the history to see if there have been any issues.

MB reminded the group that the operation would be conducted 2000m underground and that 98% of the fluid used is water with the remaining 2% of chemical additives being non-hazardous and some of which are food grade.

JS – How does this compare to fracking in the US?

MA – The majority of US operations use very large volumes of water and sand (as a proppant). They are looking to drill into rocks without porosity to crack open the rock to get to the oil or gas stored in those small pores. This is putting a lot more energy into the ground and the rocks are more brittle, which is likely to cause more seismic issues.

In comparison, this operation uses a much smaller amount of gelled water and proppant to get past a small area of damage immediately around the well bore. It is very small scale by comparison.

Site visit

MH asked if it would it be possible for the CLG to come for a site visit.

MA responded that once the current COVID restrictions are eased, in principle this would be ok but there are safety issues so it would not be possible to accommodate the whole CLG. In smaller numbers it could be accommodated post lock down.

Update on planning

AL outlined for the group the background on the planning process which had been undertaken for the Wressle site. This included the details of the public enquiry in November 2019 following the refusal by the local authority for the retention of the site and its use for production. In January 2020, the planning inspector granted the application subject to conditions which needed to be discharged prior to any works on site. These were around load bearing and the depth of aggregate on site, noise, and boreholes as well as the Construction Quality Assurance (CQA) scheme.

These were submitted to the Council who undertook internal consultation with its teams including environmental health for noise monitoring, and the EA.

He told the group the council's remit is to discharge the condition and monitor them.

There is an outstanding condition to be agreed around noise and lighting for any drilling rig to be used for the side-track drilling phase.

PF – There is also an application with NLC for hazardous substances consent for storage of oil on site. Appleby and Broughton Town Council have not objected and we expect a determination soon.

MB – This application is about the storage of a certain volume of oil on site so we will only store 50 tonnes at any time until this is granted.

LJ – How much can be stored and for how long?

MB – currently 50 tonnes which is about 400 barrels and there is no time limit to how long it can be stored.

MA – there has been a significant delay to processing this application because the HSE has resource issues due to its focus on COVID.

Update from EA

HG - Egdon have a permit for the site with specific conditions. EA undertake routine inspections of the site and I have been on two site visits this year and I have found nothing to be concerned about.

There is an application to vary the permit to allow discharge of water into the Ella Beck via an interceptor.

LH – Will the change in permit allow Egdon to discharge water into the Ella Beck?

HG – We are talking about rainwater. This is a sealed site with a waterproof membrane. Currently rainwater is collected and tankered away, but the application will allow it to be run through an interceptor to be cleaned before discharge.

It is a class one interceptor of the type used on any industrial site or a fuel station. The water released is, in essence, clean water. If there were any spillage it would not be released. The interceptor is the best piece of kit that can be used for the job and is used across the country in many applications. It would only allow release of water which has contaminant levels of 5mg to one litre maximum.

We have produced a couple of updates about the site and there is an email address in that update if anybody has any questions.

SS – How often are you visiting the site?

HG – Two times so far this year, there is not a lot going on at the moment as it is being flow tested.

SS – Do you have a minimum number of visits you need to make?

HG – Once per year is the minimum but I spend a good proportion of my working day in relation to this site and will be visiting regularly.

MB – For context during the 2015/16 operation we had 14 EA visits and one or two from the HSE too.

TH – Do you do downstream monitoring too?

HG – If the interceptor is working it is not required. It is kept in good condition and serviced and maintained. It also has a hydro break system so excess water cannot push through.

LJ - Who undertakes the routine inspection?

HG – Egdon undertakes the sampling and I and sure they will go above and beyond the level required in the permit. We then check that it has been done. They send the samples to an independent laboratory for analysis and then send us a report I check and discharge as part of the permit.

MA – It is in our interests to make sure that nothing contaminates surface waters and boreholes.

MB – We also use an independent company to take water samples at three different points from the Ella Beck (upstream, adjacent and downstream). This sampling is undertaken by a third party and analysed at certified laboratories.

LJ – Are these results available to the public?

HG – Yes they are.

JS – As a marine engineer I can say that 5mg/litre is incredibly low compared with marine regulations which are 15mg per litre. That is pretty clean water in my experience.

Date of next meeting

The group agreed that the next meeting would be in around 6 weeks when the timing of the proppant squeeze operation is determined.