

Wiltshire Council

Council

18 October 2016

From Bill Jarvis, Keep Wiltshire Frack Free

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste

Question (Ref P16/13)

Wiltshire Council are no doubt aware that the 4 licence areas for unconventional gas development (PEDLs ST84,85 and ST94,95) to the west of the County have recently been abandoned by the potential Developer and handed back to the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA).

- a) To give reassurance to the people of this County that no unconventional gas extraction (fracking) will take place, will Wiltshire Council confirm that they have established from the OGA that these licences will not be reissued, either to the original developer or to any other organization in the future
- b) If the Council cannot give this assurance, we must assume that these licences could well be reactivated at any time.

The Council Planning Department has issued a briefing note to Councillors entitled Onshore Hydrocarbon Extraction (Briefing note 303), which concludes that there is no further action required to protect the County from the dangers of fracking. As demonstrated by the many unanswered questions we have submitted to you previously we do not agree with this conclusion.

Please advise therefore how Wiltshire Council will give assurance of protection from the impacts of fracking as their existing policies fail to do so.

Response

- a) The OGA has confirmed that all four of the blocks of land in Wiltshire offered under the 14th Onshore Licencing Round will not now be awarded. These licences will not be reissued under the 14th Round as the 14th Licencing Round is closed. South Western Energy or any other prospective developer will now have to reapply under a new 15th licencing round (if one occurs) or the 'out-of-round' process. However, the out-of-round process can only be used if justified by exceptional circumstances, and should not be seen as a routine alternative to the Licensing Rounds system.
- b) See response to question a) above.

The Councillor Briefing Note did not conclude as suggested. The conclusion is as follows:

24. Conclusion

24.1. This report outlines the current position with respect to shale gas and coalbed methane development, both nationally and in Wiltshire. These technologies are new in an onshore UK context but the Government considers that they will potentially have a significant future role to play in achieving benefits, both economically and in terms of energy security.

24.2. Following the granting of PEDL licences, Wiltshire Council has not received any application in relation to oil and gas exploration and hydraulic fracturing (fracking). Before an application is submitted, it is expected that engagement between the licensee and public will occur.

24.3. It is considered that the planning system and current national and local planning policy provides an appropriate basis for assessing the environmental implications of any such future proposals. In addition, such proposals would be subject to substantial additional controls under separate regulatory regimes administered by the Environment Agency, DECC and the Health and Safety Executive.

24.4. The Council will continue to review the progress of PEDL licences both within Wiltshire and other Local Authority areas.

Question (Ref P16/14)

What plans have Wiltshire Council put in place to discharge their responsibilities to the people of Wiltshire with respect to the Paris Agreement, being ratified by the UK Govt before the year end?

All questions put to the Council from Keep Wiltshire Frack Free.

Response

Wiltshire Council has a responsibility for addressing climate change through adaptation and mitigation both within its services and as part of its community leadership role.

The Council's Energy, Change and Opportunity (ECO) Strategy 2011 – 2020, is a framework document designed to identify how Wiltshire as a council and a community can act on climate change. The overarching framework document is supplemented by three detailed action plans, which set out more specifically how we are going to deliver our climate change ambitions.

- Carbon Management Plan for the council's emissions (published March 2011)
- Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Wiltshire (revised 2016)
- Wiltshire Energy Resilience Plan (published 2015)

The Energy, Change & Opportunity Board met most recently on the 5th October 2016.

The Board approved the 2016 revised Climate Change Adaptation Plan. Reports were received from across the Council services including Fleet, Waste, Public Health, Property and Economic Development and Planning as climate change activity is now embedded within the authority's services (Climate Change Adaption Plan). The revised Climate Change Adaptation Plan is being loaded onto the Council's website and should be available for download towards the end of next week.

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Public Participation

From Mrs Anne Henshaw, CPRE Wiltshire Branch

To Councillor Richard Britton, Chairman of Council

Question (Ref P16/15)

Given the importance to the public of the substance of the Motions proposed by Councillor Caswill we ask whether there is any reason why there should not be a free vote on them?

We ask for a free vote.

Response

In accordance with Paragraph 30 of Part 4 of the Constitution, a verbal response will be provided at the meeting.