

Chairman's Announcements

Subject:	Hydrocarbon Extraction (also known as fracking)
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The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) received 95 licence applications to explore for onshore oil and gas covering 295 'blocks' in England, Scotland and Wales, of which 159 blocks were further considered - four of these related to Wiltshire.

Wiltshire Council responded to the consultation from DECC on 29 September 2015; giving its considered views both on the consultation in general, as well as on the technical assessment carried out, with particular reference to the four blocks identified in the Wiltshire area.

The Oil & Gas Authority granted four Petroleum Exploration and Development Licenses (PEDL) for Wiltshire. These licenses contain conditions which prohibit all or specific activities in parts of the block, to protect ecological sites.

The award of a PEDL does not of itself give permission for operations to begin. The necessary planning and regulatory consents will be required before development can take place. All proposals will be scrutinised by the Environment Agency, and by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The licenses do not grant planning permission which is the role of either the Government, or Wiltshire Council as Mineral Planning Authority, should an application be called in. Wiltshire Council, as Mineral Planning Authority, has not received a planning application to date, nor has the Council been contacted by the company concerned regarding their license applications.

Following the granting of the PEDL, a motion on hydrocarbon extraction was put forward from Councillors Jeff and Helen Osborn at Full Council on 23 February 2016, which was referred to Overview and Scrutiny.

On 1 March 2016, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee requested that officers undertake an investigation into hydrocarbon extraction; to include technical explanations of the process, current national policy and the process of decision making; in particular, what functions are devolved to local authorities or retained at a national level and what policies are in place in Wiltshire Council, in relation to this issue.

Further information on hydrocarbon exploration is found in the following Briefing Notes:

- Briefing Note 252 – Habitat Regulations Assessment
- Briefing Note 257 – Habitats Regulation Assessment
- Briefing Note 270 – Consultation Surface Development Restrictions
- Briefing Note 271 – Oil and Gas Licensing