

## **West Newton Community Liaison Committee**

**7pm on 06 November 2014**

**Densholme Care Farm, Great Hatfield**

### **Notes of Meeting**

**Attendees:** David Montagu-Smith (Chairman, Rathlin Energy ) - DM-S  
Tom Selkirk (Project Manager, Rathlin Energy ) - TS  
Jonathan Foster (HSE Manager, Rathlin Energy) - JF  
Tony Fildes (HSE, Rathlin Energy) - TF  
Caroline Foster (Field Manager, Rathlin Energy) - CF  
Marlon Wall (Engineer, Rathlin Energy) - MW  
Kate Smith (Security, Rathlin Energy ) - KS  
Norman Wilkie (Chairman of Withernwick Parish Council) - NW  
Ron Jagger (Resident of Burton Constable) - RJ  
Geoff North (Representing Aldbrough Parish Council) - GN  
Don Fields (Representing Burton Constable Parish Council) - DF  
Karen Parker (Representing Ellerby Parish Council) - KP  
Simon Taylor (Communications, Rathlin Energy) - ST

**Apologies:** Deborah Stabler (Representing Burton Constable Parish Council) - DS

#### **1. Welcome and Previous Minutes**

DM-S opened the liaison group meeting, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

He reminded the community liaison committee members that Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited (Rathlin) is not undertaking any high volume hydraulic fracturing in the Bowland Shale in East Yorkshire and that the company does not plan to do so in the future.

He also recapped on matters raised at the previous meeting and reconfirmed that a decision had been taken not to exercise the company's permitted option to undertake the Namurian flow test or the Bowland Shale mini fall-off test at West Newton A. He reminded resident representatives that in oil and gas exploration it is important that companies understand the key components of the petroleum system in the basin. These include: the source rock, the sealing rock and the reservoir rock. Without detailed knowledge of these, Rathlin's comprehension of the petroleum system would be incomplete. Therefore an understanding of the component parts would always be essential to the company's ongoing operations.

He said that the reason for not undertaking the Namurian flow test or the mini fall-off test in the end was that the company had analysed and established all that it needed to know about the Namurian and the Bowland Shale from the core samples, drill cuttings and wire-line logs recovered when the well was drilled last year. This means that Rathlin's ongoing exploration programme will focus exclusively on the conventional Permian carbonate reservoirs.

Resident representatives said that this news had been welcomed by people in their constituencies.

DM-S asked resident representatives if they had a copy of the notes from the last meeting dated 16 September 2014. Everyone confirmed they had and they were approved as an accurate representation of what was discussed at that meeting.

## 2. Introduction of a New Member

DM-S said that he was delighted to report that Deborah Stabler (DS) had agreed to join the West Newton liaison committee, but unfortunately she was unable to attend this evening. DS will join the liaison committee as Burton Constable's new parish council representative.

## 3. West Newton A Wellsite Operational Update

JF said that work at the West Newton A wellsite was now complete and that the equipment on site would be demobilised over the coming days and weeks. He said that the well testing phase had revealed some encouraging results.

Resident representatives asked if the well had failed as this was something that the protestors, camped alongside the site, were claiming. JF said that this was not true. He explained that in the summer/autumn of 2014, Rathlin tested the Permian formation at the West Newton well-site. During the operation, following perforating of the casing in the hydrocarbon bearing formation, the well began to flow gas. The hydrostatic weight of the brine in the well was not heavy enough to completely stop the gas flowing from the formation into the internal casing string through the perforations. There was no well integrity issue.

A coil tubing unit was mobilised to site to displace the existing brine with heavier weight brine. Once the old brine had been replaced with new, heavier weighted brine, the operation continued.

He explained that this kind of thing is not unusual in oil and gas exploration (as exploration is by its very nature the investigation of, and professional reaction to, the unknown).

He then referred to a recent statement issued by the Health and Safety Executive that read as follows:

*"HSE has been informed that there has been a small increase in pressure within the well casing in the gas well at West Newton. This pressure is contained within the well and is being monitored by the operators. Wells are designed to allow this type of pressure build-up and for it to be safely bled off and circulated out.*

*(During well testing operations a small pressure build up has slowly percolated through the well control brine, Rathlin Energy are currently preparing to introduce a heavier brine into the well which is used to maintain the necessary hydrostatic control pressure within the well).*

*"The well operator will continue to keep HSE informed and HSE inspectors will continue to monitor the situation. There are no well integrity issues and there has been no unplanned release of fluids from the well."*

*NB - The well at West Newton is aimed at a conventional gas reservoir. It is not aimed at shale gas and so there are no plans to use fracking.*

Resident representatives asked again about the smell that was apparent near the site. JF said that this was associated with the above alongside a combination of naturally occurring constituents within the Permian formation.

He said that the odour management plan had helped to mitigate the problem which, as was generally acknowledged, was intermittent and largely localised. He said that the approved flare stack did not contemplate this kind of operating condition and that too had contributed to the issue. He confirmed that Rathlin would be seeking an alternative flaring solution going forward.

ST confirmed that two residents had contacted Rathlin to report the smell and that most of the main concerns seemed to have been raised by protestors camping alongside the site. JF said that the odour was recognised to be a nuisance and that it was not harmful to health.

JF confirmed that environmental monitoring had resumed throughout the operations and that the wellhead and the perimeter ditches would continue to be monitored during the suspension period at West Newton A.

KS said that it appeared that a Mr Malcolm Blackman, a self-proclaimed environmental monitor and the last remaining protestor, had locked the protest camp up and left. She explained that site security would remain in place and the level of which would depend on protestor activity over the coming weeks and months. KS also reminded resident representatives that there was a case due to be heard at Hull County Court on 05 December 2014 re: the rights over which Mr Blackman and other protestors had for camping on the local farmer's land. [**Post meeting note:** The judge ruled against the protest camp at West Newton on 05 December 2015 and awarded a minimum of £10,000 in costs. Rathlin is now paying contractors to have the mess that the protestors have left behind cleaned up and taken away].

#### 4. **Seismic Update**

CF gave an update on the current seismic testing programme. She explained that Rathlin had started to advise nearby residents about its seismic work and the data acquisition phase. Resident representatives were asked to refer to the notes of the last meeting for details about what the programme would involve (the map in section 5 of the forthcoming information sessions was displayed and discussed). CF said that the programme was expected to begin towards the end of November and would be completed by mid-week in the second week of December. She said that more than 3,000 leaflets would be distributed to those who lived 250m from the data points around the area.

#### 5. **West Newton B**

TS confirmed that a new location had been identified for a second well site in the West Newton area, known as West Newton B. He said that the proposed site is in the Burton Constable parish. He explained that 9,000 invitations had been sent out to community representatives, estate agents, the media and residents to invite them to an information session on 07 and 08 November to find out more about the proposed site and Rathlin's plans.

He then went through each of the slides that would be displayed at the information session in turn (please see the news section of the Rathlin website to view the information panels: <http://www.rathlin-energy.co.uk/public-information-session/>).

TS said that the screening application would be submitted at the end of the following week and that it was hoped that the full planning application would be submitted in December 2014. It was then anticipated that the planning application would be determined by East Riding of Yorkshire Council in March or April 2015.

TS reconfirmed that the new well would be drilled to a total depth of around 2,000m approximately 1,000m above the Bowland Shale. He said that this served to reinforce Rathlin's previous commitments and, he hoped, would bring an end to all of the nonsense about the company's alleged plans to carry out high volume hydraulic fracturing in the Bowland Shale at West Newton.

Resident representatives asked if Sproatley was Rathlin's preferred route for traffic to and from the new site. TS confirmed that this seemed to be the logical access and egress route, but that the matter would form part of East Riding of Yorkshire Council highways department's detailed considerations.

## 6. **Residents' Meeting**

ST said that all 9,000 leaflets had now been hand delivered to houses across 21 parishes within the Holderness area. He said that the purpose of the information sessions on 07 and 08 November was to update everyone on the work programme so far, to talk about the forthcoming seismic work and the proposed new well site at West Newton B.

He explained that the event was ticketed and that people would need to pre-register to attend via the website on the invitation or that they could call an 0800 (freephone) number where someone would take their details and register them personally.

ST said that there would be representatives from all disciplines from Rathlin in attendance and on hand to answer any questions. He also confirmed that the information panels shown earlier by TS would be displayed and that drilling equipment, casing strings and other operational items would be on display for people to see and ask questions about.

Resident representatives asked why it was necessary to make the event ticketed. ST said that Rathlin's primary concern was for the residents directly affected by the company's operations – in other words, nearby neighbours. He said that the objective was to have a sensible and informed discussion in a professional environment where people can ask questions of people who specialise in different areas of Rathlin's work – from the Chairman to the people on the ground. He said that by making the information sessions ticketed, Rathlin could ensure and facilitate peaceful discussions with people who have a genuine interest in hearing about what the company is and isn't doing.

ST urged resident representatives to encourage local residents to attend as Rathlin wanted to engage with and educate as many people as possible about the company's work. He said that the information panels would be posted on the Rathlin website straight after the information sessions (4pm on Saturday 08 November) for anyone who could not attend and for people who live outside the local areas personally invited.

## 7. **Any Other Business**

DM-S asked resident representatives if there was any other business to discuss. No further items were raised.

## 8. **Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

DM-S suggested that the next meeting be held once the new application had been submitted and that ST would contact resident representatives in January to arrange an agreeable date and time. He said that Rathlin would be writing to the parish councils currently participating in the liaison committee meetings to encourage both council and resident representatives to attend the next meeting as per the liaison committee's constitution. He also said that Humbleton and Sproatley parish councils would be invited to send representatives. Resident representatives agreed that this was a good idea.

DM-S thanked resident representatives for their proactive input and reminded them that Rathlin intended to be a good neighbour at all times.

He also said that the company is accessible 24-hours a day, seven days a week and urged anyone with any concerns to get in touch.

He said that further updates are available via Rathlin's website: [www.rathlin-energy.co.uk](http://www.rathlin-energy.co.uk) and reminded resident representatives about the 24-hour emergency number: 0800 1959154.