PRESS RELEASE

Second Cuadrilla Public Planning Inquiry to Start in Lancashire

On behalf of Roseacre Awareness Group, Frack Free Lancashire and Central Lancashire Friends of the Earth

Thursday 5 April 2018

For immediate release

*Photo opportunity 09.00hrs on Tuesday 10 April 2018, outside Blackpool Football Club

On Tuesday 10 April at Blackpool Football Club, a further Public Inquiry, into Cuadrilla’s plans to frack for shale gas at Roseacre Wood - their second Lancashire site - is due to commence and will last for two weeks.

Residents of Roseacre village and supporters from across Lancashire and beyond will gather outside the Inquiry on the first day, from 8.30am-12pm (1). The rally will hear from speakers from a range of political parties, community groups against fracking, trade unions and other groups.

Cuadrilla applied to frack at two sites on the Fylde in June 2014 but both were rejected by Lancashire County Council. These sites became the subject of a Planning Inquiry in 2016.

The UK government overturned the council’s refusal at Preston New Road, and was
“minded to approve” fracking at Roseacre if Cuadrilla could overcome concerns related to traffic and safety (2).

Cuadrilla’s revised traffic plans would negatively affect many more communities as Cuadrilla’s proposals include three alternative traffic routes to get the largest HGVs to this quiet rural Fylde location. The routes include the A583 Blackpool Road and A585 Fleetwood Road, passing through many villages such as Clifton, Salwick, Inskip, Roseacre, Crossmoor and Elswick.

The revised traffic plans were unanimously rejected by both Fylde Borough Council and Lancashire County Council (3). Two Lancashire Conservative MPs, Mark Menzies and Ben Wallace, whose constituencies will be affected, have joined in opposition to the plans. Mark Menzies MP for the Fylde, in his letter to Lancashire County Council, objected stating:

“I do not believe that HGV traffic concerns can be addressed at the site. The company’s proposals simply cannot be reconciled with the quiet rural roads that service access to the proposed shale gas site. I am therefore clear that Cuadrilla Resources’ proposed Roseacre Wood site must not be permitted to go ahead as there are no circumstances in which it can mitigate against the unacceptable hazard that the introduction of such a large number of HGVs will present to local road users.” (4)

Wendy McKay, the Planning Inspector from the previous Planning Inquiry, concluded that planning policy supporting “national need” for shale gas does not overcome public safety (5). Roseacre Awareness Group has highlighted the risks of the latest traffic plans and HGV movements on the narrow country lanes. The residents’ group points out that Cuadrilla’s mitigation includes installing 39 new passing places along the route in places where HGVs cannot pass other traffic. They further emphasised that Roseacre Wood is highly popular for tourism, recreation and leisure especially cycling, running and horse riding. All of these pursuits would be directly threatened by the proposal.

Barbara Richardson, Chair of Roseacre Awareness Group, who will be presenting evidence to the Inquiry opposing the revised traffic plans on behalf of residents and seven parish and town councils, said:

“It has been four long years. These fracking plans have been rejected at every level from the residents to our parish, borough and county council. We are only a small community and it has taken us thousands of hours of unpaid work and tens of thousands of pounds, but we are determined to fight this to the bitter end. We see this is an injustice and infringement of our human rights.

“We were absolutely appalled when the Secretary of State said he was still minded to approve the plans if Cuadrilla could overcome traffic problems. They haven’t managed to do this in four years, why should they have been given another chance now?

“We are ordinary members of the public who understand the harm this industry will bring to our community, our health and well-being, our environment and ultimately climate change, and we are prepared to stand up and speak out.

“Our evidence is strong and robust and, if it was just down to that, we believe we
would win. Should the decision go against us we will not stop here. We will continue to oppose the plans and will fight at every level to protect our community, and others, from harm. We will not stop until fracking is taken off the agenda, after all, extracting fossil fuels is a backward and unwelcome step. It is far better to invest in energy efficiency programmes and sustainable renewable energy solutions.”

Dorothy Kelk from Central Lancashire Friends of the Earth stated:

“Instead of forcing fracking onto communities and locking us into more climate-changing fossil fuels, the Government should invest in clean renewable energy technologies to power us now and in the future, and which could create tens of thousands of new jobs in Lancashire and the North West.”

“The Inquiry is being closely watched by communities across England who are facing the threat of fracking, and comes as several councils across the Midlands and the North have opposed shale gas exploration already this year (6).”

Kelly Jennings is from Woodsetts Against Fracking in South Yorkshire, where Rotherham council voted last month against plans by INEOS to drill a well for shale gas exploration. She is attending the Public Inquiry in support of Roseacre community next week. Kelly said:

“If fracking can go ahead in a rural community like Roseacre it could get approved anywhere. Communities like ours in Woodsetts and all over England are starting to wake up as the threat becomes more real. Opposition to fracking will continue to grow as more people become aware of the impacts and take a stand against this polluting industry.”

Since Cuadrilla began work at Preston New Road in January 2017, the site has attracted daily protests, which continue with three months of peaceful action ahead of Cuadrilla’s planned fracking at the site later this year (7). Frack Free Lancashire outlined that the policing costs have already passed £7 million of taxpayers’ money. There are grave resource implications of a second site in the Fylde (8).

ENDS

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Notes
1. https://www.facebook.com/events/212372212679848/
wood-fracking-site/ and https://drillordrop.com/2018/01/19/borough-councillors-vote-unanimously-against-cuadrillas-revised-fracking-plans/


5. para 12.860 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeals-cuadrilla-bowland-ltd-and-cuadrilla-elswick-ltd-refs-3134386-3130923-3134385-and-3130924-6-october-2016 “Since the proposed development would be neither safe nor sustainable, it would not have the support of the WMS (Written Ministerial Statement). The national need for shale gas exploration cannot, therefore, be pleaded in support of this appeal. Even if it were appropriate to take that factor into account, I believe that the need to ensure the safety of members of the public is paramount and would strongly outweigh that important consideration.”


9. Roseacre photograph attached