



Underground Gas Storage in Preesall: what next?

Meeting at Wyre Council, 20th March 2018

Cllrs Paul Moon and Phil Orme had arranged a meeting between members of No Gas Storage community group and the planning department at Wyre Council to clarify issues and concerns brought up by the local community at meetings on the underground gas storage development and to expand on how the development will progress from here on.

Planning Department

The Wyre Council planning department was represented by the Head of Planning and one of two officers dedicated to the work of reviewing the requirements of the development consent order as they are submitted by Halite Energy, as well as enforcement of agreed conditions.

No Gas Storage

The community group was represented by Claire Rimmer and Philippa Curtis.

Introduction

The planning department gave an introduction to the history of the project and changes to regulations since 2008. The Halite project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. As such Wyre Council has a role as the relevant authority to monitor how the developer implements many of the scheme's requirements to see that they are done in accordance with the approved plans. Wyre Council will not be involved in the issue of the brine outfall pipe as it falls outside the borough boundary and is the responsibility of the Environment Agency and the Marine Monitoring Organisation. The primary responsibility for ensuring that the DCO is complied with falls on the developer.

Halite Energy has sent in seven or eight documents to date including on dust emissions, decommissioning, light, temporary fencing and stages of development. The planning officer's role is to check that the documents contain all the necessary information and to consult with other bodies such as the Highways Authority and Natural England where necessary. They request a response from other agencies within 21 days where possible. The planning officer then writes a report to say who they have consulted with, any recommendations and the determination. This decision is relayed back to Halite including whether the plans are acceptable according to the requirement in the DCO. If something is considered to be not acceptable at this stage, they would ask Halite to reconsider.

The timeline for each document submitted by Halite is approximately eight weeks but it can take longer if a requirement is particularly sensitive.

There is no statutory requirement at the present stage to consult with local people. Feedback on documents submitted by Halite eg on noise or traffic, can be sent by email to the planning department or as a comment on the website. Any comments sent in will be read and if they raise an issue necessary actions will be taken but there will be no reply. There may be a note in the planning officer's report to say how many comments were received and considered.



Underground Gas Storage in Preesall: what next?

Meeting at Wyre Council, 20th March 2018

In determining the application the Secretary of State will have had to weigh up the positives and negatives. The fact that consent was granted doesn't mean it will cause no harm but a degree of harm that is acceptable.

Enforcement powers are in the 2008 Act but not as stringent as previously. Wyre Council will not be at the site every day so are relying on third parties to report problems and then they will check.

Independent consultants will be hired where necessary to check conditions eg on the underwater drilling.

Noise

There has been no update from Halite energy on the baseline levels for noise at the River Wyre points for receptors. There are nationally accepted day time and night time levels of noise for this type of project.

A588 and traffic

Lancashire County Council (LCC) will look at national standards for highways, crossing points and visibility for the junction with the A588. Discussions are still ongoing. Any works eg to move a bus stop, then LCC would want the bus stop upgraded rather than downgraded. The Section 278 agreement will look at the junction, access but also if it is safe including forward visibility for cars.

No Gas Storage advised to write to Cllrs Salter and Shedwick to check on the access road and the stream and what the latest developments are.

In the past it has proved difficult to hold developers to account for damage to highways as it is difficult to prove impact from a specific development and impose conditions on it.

Decommissioning

No Gas Storage asked about a financial bond as this is not in the DCO. No specific financial figure has been put aside. Legally responsibility lies with the landowner who ever that may be.

Split projects

Starting the project before all elements of the project have been passed is at the risk of the developer.

Community concerns

These can be sent by email to the planning department as well as to Paul Moon, Phil Orme and Peter Cartridge.

Halite Energy is required to design a scheme for complaints about noise as part of the DCO. The community could suggest a certain time scale for replies, for example. There was a discussion about the community monitoring noise themselves. Readings from mobile phones would not be calibrated



Underground Gas Storage in Preesall: what next?

Meeting at Wyre Council, 20th March 2018

instruments but could be useful as an indication of problems, also if several people notify Wyre of problems at the same time.

Flooding

The Flood Forum and the Environment Agency will be walking the dykes from Grange Pool before the summer to check them. A licence is needed because the haul road is close to the watercourse a licence will be required but the Environment Agency had still not received this application recently.

Safety

No Gas Storage was recommended to write to Lancashire Chief Fire Officer although it is unlikely Halite are up to this stage yet. As the development will be a COMAH site, the Health and Safety Executive should be very active in their monitoring.

Contacts

There is a complaints form on-line for Wyre at:

https://www.wyre.gov.uk/forms/form/8/en/planning_enforcement_complaint_report_form

Complaints can also be emailed to planning@wyre.gov.uk