National Infrastructure Directorate
The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

2nd June 2012

Re: Preesall Saltfield Underground Gas Storage
Planning Inspectorate Reference Number: EN030001

Interested Party Reference Number: [xxxxx]

Summary

A personal objection from registered interested party Marilyn Mulroy with appendix of sample comments of objection (spreadsheet ref MM1) received by the Protect Wyre Group.

Dear Sirs

Although this is a personal representation, I write also on behalf of the views of thousands of local people who have expressed their objections to this latest planning application for underground gas storage in the Wyre area.

I find I am uniquely placed, married to Ian Mulroy, chair of the Protect Wyre Group, and I am also an editor of 2 local community magazines. We are now 10 years and 4 planning applications on from raising the question, “What does the proposal for underground gas storage entail?” It’s been a long, too long, a journey. Hardly a week goes by (and latterly never a day) without phone calls, emails or callers at the door wanting to know more.

There is no doubt that this latest potentially dangerous planning application is no more welcome to thousands of residents living in Wyre than the previous three, which have been rejected at local (town and parish councils), regional (Wyre Council), county (Lancashire County Council) and government levels (Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government following a Public Inquiry)

Planning laws have changed over the course of the four applications but despite the more recent development of a Community Liaison Panel and further public exhibitions about the project, hosted by Halite, safety and environmental fears still abound and public opinion has not, in my view, been won over. Given the past history of plans submitted by the company, albeit in another name, this is perhaps hardly surprising. There are still questions outstanding, not least emergency evacuation procedures should an accident occur, as nothing can be guaranteed 100% safe in the view of most people, and what would happen to the area when the storage caverns are de-commissioned in the future.

Safety is uppermost in many minds and the sudden and unexpected blow out of brine well 45 last June (2011) has served as another reminder of the dangers of managing land that is unstable due to salt mining and industrial scale brine pumping in the past. Local residents, descendants of generations born and bred in the area and thereby knowing the history of it, testify in their responses to the unpredictability of the land.
Halite are the current land managers, thereby inherently accepting responsibility for maintaining and monitoring the condition and pressure of the brine wells, yet they appear to have been slow off the mark and taken by surprise in their reaction to the blow out, with local people being the first on the scene and initiating responses to it contacting both the company and the relevant agencies required; hardly reassuring to think we would all be dependent on them if a gas escape occurred and emergency evacuation procedures had to be instigated. Accusations of sabotage as an explanation for the brine well incident, with local objectors to the gas storage scheme being interviewed by Police, has also further fuelled local incredulity and anger. Local opposition has never taken the form of aggressive protest following rather the statutory means available for registering concerns.

Repeated submission of planning applications has generated a high level of frustration and anxiety. Edward Simpson, Planning Inspector at the 2005/2006 Inquiry, in his report to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, discussing whether the fear expressed by local residents represented a rational response, draws attention to incidents of explosions and/or fires resulting from the escape of gas from underground gas storage facilities in Kansas and Texas. Coupled with the local Abbeystead disaster of 1984 in which 16 people were killed by the escape of methane gas at an underground pumping station at a River Wyre outfall, reminding local people of the destructive capability of a gas explosion, led him to state that “Against this background, the initial reactions of fear at the potential destruction which could be caused by a “failure” at the UGS facility cannot reasonably be said to be irrational”.

Subsequent to the Inspector’s comments, a separate project of testing with a view to gas ‘fracking’ has taken place in adjacent countryside at Cuadrilla’s site at Preese Hall causing two earthquakes in April and May 2011. These earthquakes were felt in the Wyre estuary regions, further contributing to fears of the unsuitability of storing gas underground. The fear of sitting on top of a potential ‘timebomb’, as many have expressed it, remains a valid concern.

Safety apart, I am particularly concerned that the local countryside, coastline, wildlife and marine life in this area would suffer irreparable damage if the scheme were to go ahead and this is unacceptable to so many of us who care about the planet and our living environment.

In conclusion, if this planning application is passed it will be a travesty of justice. For democracy to have credibility the wishes of thousands of protestors, with cross party political support, over a protracted period of time, must surely be taken into account and this application rejected once and for all.

I hope the Planning Inspectorate will respectfully read all responses. In recent years being proud of our British heritage seems to have become something of an anachronism, but I am writing this on the weekend of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee when being British is something to remember and celebrate. The right to freedom of speech, such an important and vital part of this heritage, has been exercised in abundance in the responses received by the Protect Wyre Group.

Many things are only as complicated as we make them, so please just say NO to underground gas storage, remove all fear of danger and restore peace of mind to the residents of Wyre, so many of whom have fought so long and hard for this outcome.

Yours sincerely
Marilyn Mulroy (Mrs)

Appendix

A representative sample of objections to underground gas storage listed on spreadsheet MM1
MM1 – 1. When ICI owned the land in the 1960s the Agglebys Farm was demolished and an area was cordoned off as likely to collapse. In the spring of 1965 the subsidence happened a field away from the cordoned area. Throughout 1964 a farmer used a tractor on that field. Living across the road I and my children had also been in that field. Even ICI did not know the stability of the area. Any future disturbances could destabilise the storage spaces.

MM1 – 2. It’s very stressful the worry of being blown up in bed.

MM1 – 3. I would like peace of mind and be able to carry on riding my bike in safety down the lovely countryside we are still lucky to have round here.

MM1 – 5. Ruin the dreams of a quiet idyllic last few years of hundreds of pensioners Over Wyre.

MM1 - 8. 3 failed planning applications coupled with a failed Public Inquiry should say the answer to gas storage is ‘NO’. ‘Bin’ this latest application so that we, as residents, can return to the peaceful life we once knew.

MM1 - 13. I want to feel safe when I grow up. I am 12 years old.

MM1 – 14. Changing the name of the company does not remove any of the problems.

MM1 – 16. As a volunteer countryside ranger I spend a great deal of time leading walks in the Over Wyre area and talking to local people. This scary project must be scrapped.

MM1 - 17. I am already stunned at the amount of damage to the area by “preliminary activities”. Public footpath signs thrown aside – shameful. This is an important area for wildlife & marine birds. This is a small country, too small for such a large scale development. The area too highly populated.

MM1 - 18. Please may the wisdom of the Planning Inspectorate keep our green and pleasant land as God intended it to be.

MM1 - 22. I lost close friends in the Abbeystead disaster in 1984. This scheme in this geology would pose vastly greater potential for a cataclysmic disaster than pertained in the Abbeystead incident.

MM1 - 26. With an approved scheme offshore I see no reason to put people and property at risk.

MM1 - 31. The Planning Dept at LCC were refusing planning permission due to the geology being unsuitable. Nothing has changed in the 3 years since I worked there so the more expensive option out in the Bay still stands up as the preferred solution.

MM - 37. The pipeline has been designated to run through my fields, some of which need draining. However I cannot sanction the work until either the pipeline is finished or I know that it won’t be built. This has gone on too long.

Mm1 -42. We say no but that is probably too simple a word for them to understand.

MM1 - 43. My grandfather worked on the Brine wells for 35 years and when I was a small child he told me none of that land was safe, it would all end up as water and I would see it in my lifetime.

MM1 - 49. I would not choose to move to an area where such a scheme was already in operation.

MM1 - 50. Will someone listen to common sense?

MM1 - 51. Words fail me.
MM1 - 52 Why are there no laws to stop this lot continually putting in applications? It needs sorting now.

MM1 - 55 I object to anyone trying to store gas in a colander.

MM1 - 71 There are fault lines under Preessall travelling under 2 schools in the area - this is too dangerous a scheme to allow to go ahead.

MM1 - 74 I am 95 years old & feel it’s very wrong that my life and many other aged people should be put at risk.

MM1 - 75 The original objections still stand and should be taken on board by those in a position to speak up for local people.

MM1 - 80 I worry about the loss of wildlife and our children’s future.

MM1 - 81 The damage done to every living thing.

MM1 - 85 This scheme is complete and utter folly.

MM - 88 Surely we should have the right as English people to say what goes under our feet and in OUR land.

MM1 - 89 With fracking operations being carried out just a few miles away, which has already caused concern, any underground movements causing splitting to the caverns could be catastrophic.

MM1 - 91 Pack all your gear up and go back to where you belong and leave us all in our safe environment, as quick as you can.

MM1 - 98 Concerned about the effects on my children, grandchildren & great grandchildren. This is not a legacy I would want for them.

MM1 - 109 Final Answer - NO

MM1 - 147 As a mother I want to protect my children.

MM1 - 160 – Lives and safety of people before PROFIT.

MM1 - 161 Having read reports of accidents caused by gas storage in America, it will be a disaster waiting to happen. We have to think of the next generation. It is a definite NO NO. I am 79 but quite prepared to join a protest on the site.

MM1 167 As a retired mining engineer I know the geology of this area is unsuitable for the storage of gas at very high pressure.

MM1 - 174 I have lived in the area of the proposed site for 71 years and remember how unstable the land is.

MM1 - 179 At present I rent a property in the area. I would like to buy a property, However the outcome of this application will influence my decision. I’m sure there will be others like me.

MM1 - 193 Combined with “fracking” an accident waiting to happen.

MM1 - 201 Madness v common sense only one answer – no.

MM1 - 229 This isn’t just about us, it concerns future generations.
I remember the Abbeystead disaster when we were told and assured it was very safe, but many people lost their lives in the explosion. St Michaels has never recovered fully. We do not wish this to happen to Fleetwood or anywhere else across the Fylde Coast.

I farmed over 100 acres at Staynall for 30 years and was unable even to build a slurry lagoon due entirely to the instability of the land with moving wet sand at the depth of between 7 and 9 feet. There were also 5 springs from underground sources.

Chameleon company calling itself Halite energy.

Prior to my retirement I worked at the Fleetwood Dock office as commercial manager/deputy to Port Manager. I am very much aware of erosion etc which can arise from effect to the flow of the river.

As a recently retired Over Wyre GP I am also particularly concerned regarding the physical and emotional effects on the health of 11,000 patients, many of them being elderly.

We are relying on planning to act on our behalf and protect our lives, homes and environment.

To the planning Inspectorate - Please may the gas storage plan fail and common sense prevail for once and all.

This government should show to all that they have an interest in public safety which is paramount and more valid than the vested interests of finance and industry.

Strongly object to proposal as I have a baby and feel we would need to consider moving from the area.

Leave us in peace – this is our future and the future of our future that you are playing with.

The rule should be - 3 refusals and you’re out!

Do you really think changing the name of the company will fool anybody?

Please listen to objections, saltfields are for salt not gas.

Ends