PROTECT WYRE GROUP
Fleetwood Action Group     Fleetwood Civic Society
Fleetwood Chamber of Trade & Commerce
Over Wyre Action Group
Poulton Historical & Civic Society     Poulton Residents Association
Thornton Action Group
Supported by:
Ben Wallace MP ~ Eric Ollerenshaw MP ~ Paul Maynard MP
Brian Simpson MEP

Mr Paul Hudson
National Infrastructure Directorate
The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay
BRISTOL
BS1 6PN

25th June 2012

Dear Mr Hudson

Planning Inspectorate Number: EN030001      PWG Reference Number: 10015247

Over the past few weeks Halite’s July newsletter (copy enclosed) has been circulated to homes in the Over Wyre, Fleetwood and Thornton Cleveleys areas and whilst we recognise that Halite has every right to keep the public informed on the progress of their proposed application, the presentation of the facts and the public’s interpretation of Halite’s message raise some concerns.

Members of PWG on both sides of the River Wyre have been contacted by the public in significant numbers who express great concern that the planning application now appears to be a ‘done deal’ and that the exercise currently being conducted by the Planning Inspectorate is one of ‘rubber stamping’.

The concern arises from the public’s interpretation of Halite’s words, which whilst being factually correct, are presented as marketing spin. There is no mention anywhere in their newsletter of any issues or challenges to the project that have still to be resolved whilst conversely there is significant emphasis placed on the Statements of Common Ground which leaves the reader to presume that the scheme is unopposed from any quarter and therefore due to go ahead unchallenged.

PWG members have sought to uphold the integrity of the planning process and restated its belief in the impartiality of the Planning Inspectorate but this can only be achieved on a limited basis with those who have made direct contact – the remainder of the residents will form their own views.

Yours sincerely

Ian Mulroy

Chairman: Ian Mulroy, Village Farm, 194 Park Lane, Preesall, Poulton-le-Fylde, FY6 0NW   Tel: (01253) 813433
www.pwggroup.org.uk   email: ianm@pwgroup.org.uk
Our project finds common ground with key organisations

Since the consultation in 2011 we have been working closely with a number of important organisations to address questions or concerns they may have regarding our proposals.

As a result, we have now successfully come to a mutual agreement with a wide range of local and national bodies which have signed Statements of Common Ground (SOCGs) with us on the project.

Organisations including Lancashire County Council (LCC), Wyre Borough Council (WBC), The Environment Agency Natural England, the RSPB and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) have stated that they have no concerns about important elements of our proposals including geology and safety.

This is a vital step as it gives you, members of the public, peace of mind that safety, ecology and public services organisations have carefully considered our proposals and have stated their confidence in many elements of the scheme.

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Welcome from John Roberts
Dr John Roberts CBE – Chairman, Halite Energy

Since the last edition of infocus, our project has taken a number of important steps forward.

Our proposals to develop underground gas storage caverns in Preesall have now entered the Planning Inspectorate’s six month examination phase. During this period the examining authority will carefully examine our plans, written representations, expert evidence and research before making recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

We are pleased to say that we have also now successfully reached agreement with a range of government, environmental and health bodies upon some important elements of the project including safety, geology and ecology.

Several important local and national organisations have signed Statements of Common Ground (SOCGs); official documents which state that they do not have any concerns on particular elements of our proposals.

You may also be aware that we have recently made public the details of a study which has shown that, if our plans are given the go-ahead, the development would generate a £660 million investment in the economy and 3,000 jobs at its peak, with at the very least 17 per cent of these going to local people.

More details on both the SOCGs and our economic study are covered in this newsletter.

As always we value your feedback. If you have any comments or questions, please do get in touch using the contact details on the reverse.

Did you know?
The Infrastructure Planning Commission, the independent body which was overseeing our planning application, has now been abolished.

Its work has been taken over by a new National Infrastructure Directorate that has been created within a restructured Planning Inspectorate.

Information about the Planning Inspectorate and all documentation relating to Halite’s application can now be found at http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
Statutory consultees sign Statements of Common Ground
Jobs for Lancashire: the economic benefits of our project
What happens now? The process from here
Team focus: Andrew Saunders
Our project finds common ground with key organisations
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SO CGs are also important because they ensure that as many issues as possible can be agreed by mutual consent between organisations outside of examination hearings so that the examining authority’s valuable time can be saved for addressing the most essential outstanding matters.

One of the most significant breakthroughs is that LCC has said that whilst there remain objections around impact on the landscape and the natural environment, it has no outstanding concerns regarding geology, including the location of the proposed gas storage caverns, the potential impact of any seismic activity or the migration of gas to other areas.

Meanwhile, United Utilities, in their section 42 response of 2011 expressed initial concern about the possibility of gas migrating to other towns and villages. However, discussions held with United Utilities have now discounted this.

United Utilities has now signed a SO CG which states that it has been reassured of the risk of gas escaping from the caverns at Fressall into the tunnel which carries sewage down the Fylde coast.

The HSE has assessed our plans and found that the safety measures taken with regards to the project are acceptable to them. As a result, the HSE has signed a SO CG on this issue and both LCC and WBC have noted this position.

Several ecological organisations have also signed SO CGs to show their satisfaction with our plans to protect local species – for example the rare and protected pink footed geese – and habitats.

Halite Energy Chief Executive, Keith Budinger, says: “Signing Statements of Common Ground with so many organisations on vital issues such as safety and geology is an enormous step forward for the scheme.

“We hope this will help to reassure the community that the proposed project can be built and operated safely.”

These documents have now been submitted as evidence to the Planning Inspectorate.

For more details on all of the documents submitted as part of our planning application please go to the Planning Inspectorate’s website: http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk.

More than 40 SO CGs have been agreed with national and local organisations which deal with the main issues arising from our proposals.

Here is a snapshot of some of them:

**Safety**
The HSE has assessed our application for Hazardous Substances Consent including the risk assessment submitted and is satisfied that Deemed Hazardous Substance consent can be granted. This means that they have given consent that the requested volume of gas can be stored on the site and that we are able to continue with our planning application.

**Geology**
LCC and WBC have said that they have no outstanding concerns regarding the location of the proposed gas storage caverns, including the potential impact of any seismic activity or the migration of gas to other areas.

**Migration of gas to other areas**
United Utilities has been reassured by Halite that its infrastructure, for example, the Fylde coast sewage tunnel, is not at risk from the project.

**Ecology and the local environment**
The Environment Agency, Natural England, RSPB and Lancashire Wildlife Trust have signed statements to state that they are happy with our plans to protect and preserve the local environment.

The Environment Agency has assessed measures to protect water quality, sea defences and mitigate against flood risk and Halite has pledged to monitor water quality and levels on an ongoing basis.

Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation have each also signed a SO CG to say that there would be no adverse affects on local air quality or marine estuarial ecology respectively.

**Health**
NHS North Lancashire has agreed with Halite a number of steps to ensure that any works have minimum impact through noise, dust, vibrations and traffic.

**Noise and vibration**
Halite has come to an agreement with WBC to limit the noise created by any works.
Our project finds common ground with key organisations

SOCCOs are also important because they ensure that as many issues as possible can be agreed by mutual consent between organisations outside of examination hearings so that the examining authority's valuable time can be saved for addressing the most essential outstanding matters.

One of the most significant breakthroughs is that LCC has ruled out that issues remain objections around impact on the landscape and the natural environment. It has no outstanding concerns regarding geology, including the location of the proposed gas storage caverns, the potential impact of any seismic activity or the migration of gas to other areas.

Meanwhile, United Utilities, in their section 43 response of 2011, expressed initial concerns about the possibility of gas migrating to other towns and villages. However, discussions held with United Utilities have now discounted this.

United Utilities has now signed a SOCCO which states that it has been measured of the risk of gas escaping from the caverns at Freesail and in the tunnels which carry sewage down the Fylde coast.

The HSE has assessed our plans and found that the safety measures taken with regards to the project are acceptable to them. As a result, the HSE has signed a SOCCO on this issue and both LCC and WBC have noted this position.

Several ecological organisations have also signed SOCCOs to show their satisfaction with our plans to protect local species - for example the rare and protected pink-footed geese, and bat habitat.

Haiilo Energy Chief Executive Keith Budnger says: "Signing Statements of Common Ground with so many organisations on vital issues such as safety and geology is an enormous step forward for the scheme. We hope this will help to reassure the community that the proposed project can be built and operated safely."

These documents have now been submitted as evidence to the Planning Inspectorate. For more details on all of the documents submit as part of our planning application please go to the Planning Inspectorate's website: http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk

More than 40 SOCCOs have been signed with national and local organisations which deal with the main issues arising from our proposals.

Back our project

Our proposed project represents a £860 million investment in the local area and, should it go ahead, would provide significant economic benefits to the local and regional economy in addition to the creation of jobs.

This level of investment would put the project on a similar scale to developments such as the Trafford Centre, the Glasgow M74 extension and the new build Wembley Stadium.

More than 3,000 jobs would be created directly and indirectly at the peak of the project, with an average of 1,200 jobs created during the eight year construction phase. We are committed to ensuring that, at the very least, 17 per cent of these jobs go to local people.

Following construction, the facility is planned to operate for at least 40 years and will create 35 operational roles. These jobs are all expected to be sourced from Lancashire and supported by local contracts for maintenance and ongoing work. The report has been compiled by economic development and regeneration consultants, Regeneris.

Chief Executive of Haiilo Energy, Keith Budnger said: "Haiilo is absolutely committed to ensuring that Lancashire benefits from this project and we will engage with local businesses, schools, colleges, universities and a range of other stakeholders to explore every opportunity to generate jobs locally, invest in the supply chain in Lancashire and utilise the project as an educational resource for young people."
Halite's lead environmental consultant, Andrew Saunders, is a technical director at Hyder Consulting, an international advisory and design consultancy which is working with Halite and has carried out a detailed environmental impact assessment for the proposed project. University of Manchester graduate Andrew, has more than 20 years' experience working on over 100 major infrastructure projects including gas, water and electricity projects.

Andrew has been leading the environmental impact assessment and development of management and mitigation plans for our project. The team has included a wide range of specialists across air quality, noise, landscape, ecology and cultural heritage.

He said: “This is a great project to work on as there is a real opportunity to add value and enhance the local environment. We plan to improve conditions for native wildlife by taking measures like enhancing ponds, creating new and improved habitats and food supplies through selection and planting of the right species as outlined in our landscape and ecological management strategy plan.”

What happens now?
The Planning Inspectorate process from here

Our project has now entered the Planning Inspectorate’s examination phase.

The examining authority has invited people who have registered to have their say to submit their views through written representations.

The Planning Inspectorate will now carefully assess relevant matters, including the representations of all interested parties, any evidence submitted and answers provided to questions set out in writing and explained at hearings.

They will use all the information gathered over the examination period to make their final recommendation about the acceptability of the project to the Secretary of State for the Department of Energy and Climate Change who will make a final decision early next year.

The first hearing regarding the draft development consent order was held on 24 July, with a further meeting to be held on 22 August. The meetings are hosted at the North Euston Hotel, Fleetwood, commencing at 9.30am.

These hearings are open to all, but anyone who wishes to attend should contact the Planning Inspectorate to request a place by emailing pressall@infrastructure.gsi.gov.uk or calling 0303 444 5000.

More details about the timetable are available online at http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk.