REPRESENTATION TO OPEN FLOOR HEARING

COUNCILLOR JUNE JACKSON

I have been nominated as the representative of Stalmine with Staynall Parish Council and welcome the opportunity to speak on the Parish Council's behalf at this hearing. The proposed development would impact on an extensive area of Wyre including areas within the electoral boundaries of many other Parish and Town councils; I have also been nominated as the representative of the Lancashire Association of Local Council's (LALC) to speak on their behalf.

Parish and Town Councillors are the people in closest contact with residents; we listen to those residents concerns and opinions, we are their first point of contact, we are not only their elected representatives, we are also very much a part of our local communities.

There have now been four gas storage planning applications submitted, all similar in nature and purpose.

Despite Halite’s claim to be a new company, residents view Canatex and Halite to be one and the same, yes, a few new appointments but many old familiar names and faces.

At the Issue Specific Hearing at the North Euston on 24th of July 2012, Mr. Humphries QC, the Halite lead barrister was most insistent that Canatex and Halite are the same legal entity, which does indeed confirm the public perception of Halite and Canatex as being one and the same.

At the Annual Parish Meeting at Stalmine Reading Room on Monday 13th of May 2002, serious concerns were raised by members of the public regarding the proposed gas storage by Canatex. The Parish Council was asked to initiate a public meeting in regard to those proposals.

The Chairman, Councillor Bob Pye, gave a commitment that a public meeting would be called by the Parish Council when plans had been submitted.

Bob kept his word; in response to the first gas storage application a public meeting took place on January 6th 2004.

It was a bitterly cold evening, there was an unprecedented turn out, the hall was packed, all the doors were left open and in the car park a large crowd had assembled, many more people told us after the event that they couldn’t get anywhere near and had reluctantly gone home. We gave up trying to get a count when we got to over 400. As four members of the public was the previous maximum attendance at council meetings, we were, to put it bluntly, unprepared for this unprecedented turn out.

Our Parish Clerk gave an outline of the gas storage proposals and then our chairman opened the debate, a resident asked for a vote on the issue. The question put was “Do the residents support or reject the gas storage proposals?” The vote was unanimous to REJECT THE PROPOSALS.
Despite Halite’s extensive consultation process, PR campaign and Canatxx/
Halite’s generous donations to the former High School, now a Technology
College and other organisations, for instance the Wildlife Trust; I have not
come across any reports of any councillors being approached by residents
saying that they now support the scheme. In fact quite the reverse, as the
level of knowledge and understanding of the proposals has increased, so has
the level of anxiety within the local community.

Why are so many reasonable, rational people objecting?

Many of the people who have indicated their concern in regard to the
proposals are not opposed to salt cavern gas storage in principle. They are
aware that there are alternative schemes available that would not have the
same detrimental impact on landscape and people.

They are also aware that three mile evacuation zones have been applied
when “loss of product” incidents have occurred (the industry’s terminology for
accidents); the sites where these incidents have occurred have been in
mainly lightly populated areas.

We now live in an information technology age; at the click of a keyboard or
the press of a button we have access to an immense amount of information.
Canatxx told us that no one has ever been injured by salt cavern gas
storage.

A simple internet search brought up the Hutchinson disaster, a phone call to
Cina Poyer, in Kansas who was co-ordinating the official state response to
the disaster gave me the facts.

Cina was kind enough to supply me with the contact details of the local TV
station who had swiftly placed a camera crew on the ground and a news
helicopter in the air. They supplied me with their film footage; it was 100
dollars well spent.

The rest is history, more and more salt cavern gas storage accidents have
come to light, mass evacuations result. Local residents only have to log on to
their computers to gain this information.

Here it would be logistically impossible to evacuate residents within a three
mile radius of the proposed installation due to the density of the population
and the nature of the road infrastructure.

Tailbacks and traffic queues are routine every day on the A585. Every week
when I visit the superstore at Thornton, I experience traffic either at a
standstill or progressing at walking pace on the A585.

On the east bank of the river, an accident on the A588 can cause chaos for
hours as traffic is re-directed onto single track lanes, everything from trucks,
cars, agricultural machinery, horse riders and even double decker buses are
directed into conflict with one another.
People also remember the Abbystead disaster. On a beautiful summer evening in 1984, a group of local councillors from St. Michaels On Wyre, friends and family included, accepted an invitation to visit a valve house at the outfall end of the Lune/Wyre Transfer scheme at Abbystead; in this case it was a build up of naturally occurring methane that caused the disaster, something that had not been envisaged. I knew some of the victims and saw the suffering of survivors due to severe burns injuries caused by the gas explosion. The loss of life and terrible injuries sustained has not been forgotten and never should be. It remains a tragic reminder of the destructive capability of a gas explosion.

Following the Buncefield Incident, 11th December 2005 and the report produced by the Major Incident Investigation Board it was acknowledged that previous "safety distances" needed to be revised. Safety requirements are subject to review.

Any requirement by the HSE for more robust or extensive security measures would have implications for both the visual impact of the proposals on landscape and would restrict continued accessibility by the general public to the area.

We accept risk in our daily lives but most of us make informed choices as to what we consider acceptable risks.

The people of Wyre do not believe that the Halite Gas Storage proposals are a risk that we should be prepared to accept, we have no confidence in this company. They have had many years to prove the viability of their project and have consistently failed to do so.

Canabo/Halite have repeatedly told us that the Preesall salt member is ideally suited for salt cavern gas storage and yet they have constantly revised their plans, as areas previously considered suitable have been ruled out due to faults or proximity to previous development. There are still many unanswered questions in regard to the previous salt field development, the extent of the lower conventional mine, the extent of the wild brining activities and there has been no comprehensive sonar survey to establish the condition of existing solution mined cavities.

There have been no geological surveys or adequate surveys of the areas under the SSSI or the Golf Course, this has been acknowledged by Mott McDonald as they have confirmed during the second Issue Specific Hearing that the first action to be taken on receiving planning permission will be to undertake seismic surveys, this clearly indicates that the geology is still in doubt.
I initially raised the question "Why are so many reasonable and rational people objecting to these proposals?"

I can only put forward my view; I have read every planning document and press release put forward by Canataxx/ Halite since they first brought forward their intention to develop salt cavern gas storage under the Wyre Estuary 20 years ago. I attended every session of the Public Inquiry, I've read hundreds of documents sent to me by researchers and members of the public and I've listened to and questioned Canatxx/ Halite, technical experts and also other independent experts. I've twice been to Brussels, on one occasion to attend a dinner debate at the European Parliament on European Gas Storage, to gain a better understanding and an overall view of the industry.

I have consulted my MEP on the articles of the Seveso II Directive.

The Objectives of the Seveso II Directive are:
to prevent major accidents and limit the consequences of such accidents for man and the environment.

The gas storage proposals would not accord with the objectives of the Seveso II Directive and this amounts to sufficient reason to refuse this application.

Brian Simpson MEP has made it very clear that all EU regulations must be strongly enforced.

There is also a Human Rights issue, Article 2.1 of the Human Rights Act 1998 states that everyone's right to life shall be protected by law.

There is insufficient information available to properly assess whether this is an acceptable location for this type of development to provide justification for affecting the rights of others.

I have listened to the views of ordinary members of the public and my conclusion is that:

People are fearful and anxious, they are genuinely worried for their family's future safety, should this development be permitted and they are very concerned about the tremendous impact this development would have on the area. Residents are weary of fighting these proposals; please remove the dark shadow we have been living under for so long.

I respectfully request that you recommend that this application be refused.

Thank you.