

**Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson
Interim Executive Director for Place**

Report to:	Planning and Regulation Committee
Date:	4 March 2019
Subject:	Monitoring of Operations at Biscathorpe Oil Exploration Site

Summary:

A report setting out the findings of weekly site monitoring inspection visits carried out at the Biscathorpe oil and gas site between 9 October 2018 and 13 December 2018 was presented to the Planning & Regulation Committee at their meeting on 14 January 2019. The report contained details of the visits undertaken; a summary of the status of activities/operations at that time; what issues (if any) had been identified during those visits, and; a commitment to bring back a further report which would provide an update on subsequent visits carried out.

The operations being carried out have now advanced into the drilling phase and this report sets out the findings of inspection visits carried out between 20 December 2018 and 13 February 2019.

The report notes that some breaches of planning control have been identified during the recent visits and that meeting is scheduled with the operator where a solution to these is expected to be discussed and a solution identified.

Recommendation:

That the comments of the report are noted.

Background

1. Temporary planning permission (reference: (E)N59/2259/14) for the drilling of an exploratory borehole and undertaking of production tests for conventional hydrocarbons at the Biscapthorpe site was granted on 16 March 2015. That permission was lawfully implemented on 28 February 2018. In May 2018 a further planning permission (reference: N/059/00531/18) was granted which allowed an extension to the end date for the completion of the development and to amend approved drawings so as to allow the retention of security and welfare cabins during the production testing phase.

2. A further retrospective planning permission (reference: N/059/02114/18) was subsequently granted on 3 December 2018 for the temporary installation of six site security and welfare cabins, four water bowzers, generator and associated facilities on land close to the oil exploration site. Groundwater monitoring boreholes have also since been drilled as permitted by Schedule 2, Part 17, Class KA of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
3. In December 2018 the Planning and Regulation Committee requested that a report be brought to their next meeting setting out the outcome of the Council's weekly monitoring visits to the site. A report setting out the findings of visits carried out between 9 October 2018 and 13 December 2018 (i.e. since the construction works commenced) was subsequently presented to the Committee at the meeting on 14 January 2019. This report made a commitment to bring a further report updating the Committee on further subsequent visits carried out as the operations advanced. This report reflects that commitment.

Update

4. When considering the previous report, the Committee identified that there was a gap in the site monitoring visits undertaken between 15 November and 6 December 2018 and consequently requested that this be clarified. This has been checked and can confirm that on 19 November 2018 the Monitoring Assistant attended a joint site meeting with the Environment Agency. At this meeting no issues were identified and the operations and works had not progressed a great deal since the previous site inspection conducted on 15 November - a summary of which was set out and detailed in the report. A Site monitoring visit was not carried out the week commencing 26 November 2019 as the works to be carried out that week related to the completion of the sealing of the site liner and the relocation of the site cabins to their newly approved and authorised location.

Visits – 20 December 2018 to 13 February 2019

5. Set out below are the dates of the monitoring visits that have been undertaken and the progress of the works since 13 December 2018.

20 December 2018

- In preparation for the main drilling rig, the surface conductor rig remains installed on the site and the final concreting of the well casing was being carried out at the time of inspection. Works were expected to be completed by 21 December 2018. Following completion, the rig would be removed from site;
- Cabins had been positioned on the site. Some of the cabins were due to be removed and replaced on a like for like basis;
- Lighting had been installed on the site. No complaints had been received;

- A copy of the noise monitoring survey had been submitted to the MPA on 18 December 2018. No issues were identified.

24 December 2018 and 31 December 2019

- No site inspections took place due to the Monitoring Officer being on annual leave.

7 January 2019

- The drilling rig has been installed on site and drilling commenced 7 January 2019. The works were expected to be on-going until mid-February;
- The installation of the fencing was completed. Since the previous site inspection, the emergency exit gate had been relocated to the western side of the site and scaffolding had been erected over the bund to enable access to the emergency gate. These works had been carried out in accordance with Schedule 2, Part 17, Class C of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the GPDO).

14 January 2019

- A complaint had been received on 10 January 2019 stating that at 01:28 hours a large vehicle 'with flashing lights' entered the site via the farmyard access and proceeded to the drill pad. Discussions with the operator established that the vehicle was a security 4 x 4 vehicle that is used to carry out patrols of the site on a regular basis. It was also identified that a drill bit had been delivered in the back of a pickup truck to the site via the farm access.

In response to this complaint a letter was sent to the operator on 15 January 2019 clarifying that ALL vehicles associated with the oil development were required to use the approved access on the B1225, High Street and that the use of the farm access was not permitted. The restriction on delivery times however relates to deliveries made by HGVs only. Therefore as a pickup truck is not identified as a HGV, no breach of this condition had occurred. The operator was however reminded that failure to comply with the site access restriction could result in enforcement action being taken.

- A further complaint was received on 11 January 2019 stating that containers potentially storing hazardous chemicals were being brought onto site. An enforcement case (reference: INV/0002/2019) was opened and was under investigation at that time;
- During the visit it was identified that Herras fencing had been secured to the gates on the access. This was not in accordance with the approved details and the fencing attached to the gate exceeds the height of that which is permitted development (i.e. 1 metre) under Schedule 2, Part 2 of GPDO. The operator was therefore advised to

ensure that this is returned to the approved conditions prior to the next site monitoring visit;

- The drilling rig had been installed and drilling commenced. Drilling was taking place to a depth of 207m and it was anticipated that drilling would be at 900m by the following week;
- The visit identified that additional cabins had been stationed on site. The operator was consequently advised to submit a detailed plan of the current site layout and emergency access by 30 January 2019 for consideration.

22 January 2019

- The investigation into the complaint regarding the potential storage of chemicals on site had been investigated and a site visit confirmed that the containers were for the welfare facilities and not chemicals. The Enforcement case that had been opened (reference: INV/0002/2019) was therefore closed;
- The Herras fencing secured to the gates remained in place and had not been removed as advised the previous week. The operator was therefore asked again to ensure the gate is returned to the approved state prior to the next site monitoring visit and that failure to comply may result in enforcement action being taken;
- The drilling rig remained on site and drilling was at 888m. During the site visit, the casing was being installed and it is expected that this will be cemented into place by 23 February 2019;
- The additional cabins stationed on the site (as identified during the previous visit) remained in place and details relating to these were still awaited (required by 30 January 2019 as previously advised);
- A noise complaint had been received in relation to activities being carried out during the night time period of 20 to 21 January 2019. This matter was being investigated.

29 January 2019

- The drilling rig remained on site. Drilling was at 1288m at that time and it was expected that drilling would reach 1400m by 31 January 2019. Once drilling had reached 1400m, casing would be installed and cemented into place;
- A noise complaint had been received in relation to activities carried out during the night time period between 20 and 21 January 2019. This matter is under investigation;
- A complaint was received on 28 January 2019 stating that a HGV was seen using the unapproved farm access to deliver casing to the oil site. This matter had been investigated and it was identified that security turned the vehicle around and instructed the delivery to be made through the approved access. The routing plan had been reissued to all haulage companies and contractors who are expected to visit the site;
- It was identified that lighting had been installed along the track between the farm compound and the well pad. The previously

reported Herras fencing, emergency access gate and additional cabins also remained in place and details of these (as previously requested) had not been received. It was agreed that these would be discussed at a meeting that was due to take place on 25 February 2019 (later amended to the 27 February).

4 February 2019

- The drilling rig remained on site. Drilling was at 1483m at that time.
- Welfare cabins had been swapped on a like for like basis;
- The noise complaint about operations on 20 & 21 January 2019 (reported previously) was still under investigation;
- When leaving the site, it was noted that there was staining/markings on the B1225. These markings were not considered hazardous to the highway at the time of inspection.

13 February 2019

- The drilling rig remained on site. Drilling was at 2133m. The cement plugs were due to be installed over the next few days and it was expected that the demobilisation of the rig would commence the week commencing 18 February 2019;
- Archaeological groundworks were complete and monitoring had ceased on site. The final report had not yet been received by the Historic Environment team and this was chased by the Monitoring Assistant on 13 February 2019;
- A noise monitoring survey had been carried out during the night of 1 and 2 February 2019 and a report of this submitted. This survey did not identify any noise levels exceeding the approved levels and no further complaints had been received. Therefore this matter is considered closed.

Community Liaison Group

6. The Community Liaison Group met on 16 January 2019. The group comprises of 15 members with representatives from Egdon Resources, Lincolnshire Police, the Environment Agency, Donington on Bain Parish Council, Ward Councillors for Lincolnshire County Council and East Lindsey District Council, local representatives from the communities of Donington and Burgh on Bain as well as Officers from the County Councils Planning Services team. The meeting was a productive and one of the matters raised related to the availability of the site monitoring information/reports. It was agreed that this information could be put in the public domain and that a mechanism for the most appropriate way to achieve was to be discussed and identified.
7. The outstanding matters regarding the Herras fencing, emergency access gate, lighting and additional cabins will be discussed during a meeting scheduled to be carried out on the morning of 27 February 2019. The next

CLG meeting will also take place on 27 February 2019 and an update on any issues or outcomes that arise out of that meeting will be given to the Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the contents of this report are noted.

This report was written by Eloise Shieber, who can be contacted on 01522 782070 or dev_planningsupport@lincolnshire.gov.uk