

## **Elected Community Representatives Meeting:**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019

The Brig Conference Room, ExxonMobil Fife Ethylene Plant, Mossmorran

Invitations were extended to our immediate Community Councils, as well as elected political representatives who had – at the time of the meeting – been actively engaged in discussion on FEP. A special invitation was also extended to the Mossmorran Action Group.

### **Attendees:**

<b>Attendees</b>	
Emma Miller	Hill of Beath Community Council
Morag Campbell	Hill of Beath Community Council
Jim Martin	Lumphinnans Community Council
Anna Streleckiene	Auchtertool Community Council
Liz Rae	Cowdenbeath Community Council
Peter Milmore	Cowdenbeath Community Council
Anne Smith	Burntisland Community Council
Brendan Burns	Burntisland Community Council
Councillor Alistair Bain	Fife Council & Chair of the Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay Community Safety Committee
Cllr Altany Craik	Fife Council - Representing Lesley Laird Local Area MP
Jacob McAlister (JM)	Plant Manager, ExxonMobil
Andy Bishop (AB)	Process Manager, ExxonMobil
Craig McCafferty (CM)	Major Projects Manager, ExxonMobil
Stuart Neill (SN)	External Affairs Manager, ExxonMobil
Louise Russell (LR)	Administrator, ExxonMobil
Catherine Cubitt (CC)	Community Affairs, ExxonMobil
<b>Apologies</b>	
Annabelle Ewing	MSP
Mark Ruskell	MSP
Alexander Stewart	MSP
Alex Rowley	MSP
David Torrance	MSP
Alexander Stewart	MSP
Lesley Laird	MP
Cllr Darren Watt	Cowdenbeath Ward
Cllr Kathleen Leslie	Burntisland
Cllr Ross Vetraino	Chair Fife Council Environment Comm

Lochgelly Community Council	
Aberdour Community Council	
Cardenden Community Council	
Mossmorran Action Group	

## INTRODUCTIONS

Following introductions, Stuart Neill opened by indicating that this was the first of a series of proposed meetings with the public and their elected representatives.

SN indicated that ExxonMobil had not done enough to win the trust of the public or representatives and that the company is committed to addressing that through greater engagement and improved communication of factual information.

Jacob McAlister then provided an insight to the recent and well-publicised release of ethane through a pinhole in a low pressure pipe, detailing the facts and actions taken to address. Questions and comments were then invited:

## ETHANE PINHOLE LEAK

**Peter Milmore:** What was the timeline for the recent ethane leak that has just been in the local papers?

Concern growing in the local community that for four months there was a leak that no-one knew about, add to this poor publicity about the site and recent flaring makes headline look bad.

I am very concerned about impact of flaring and misinformation on people's mental health causing fear and anxiety.

*JM: The leak had been identified through our routine inspection process. We then risk assessed and put in place mitigations to ensure continued safe operations while an engineering solution was developed.*

*The release was in a low pressure pipe and from a pin prick hole. Risk was managed in accordance with our global processes and posed no risk at all to surrounding communities.*

*There was no need for the public to be concerned but we recognise that misinformation and scaremongering does not help this situation. We are committed to more quickly getting the facts out and directly addressing where the facts are being misrepresented.*

**Jim Martin:** Four months seems an excessive time for a simple repair to be carried out, why did it take such a long time to do a repair?

Can some kind of a storage “bunker” on the pipeline route not be looked at as a possibility to remove these upsets?

*JM: Due to the very low risk associated with this pinhole leak on a 1” low pressure pipe, it allowed us to take the required time to develop an engineering solution that would address the issue while maintaining plant operations during execution.*

*We always look at potential solutions as an alternative to flaring. Bunkers are used by other facilities around the world but would require significant use of land as well as large capacity given the production rate at FEP.*

*We are, however, looking at a range of improvements that will help us to minimise the requirement for high volume elevated flaring.*

**Liz Rae:** Ethane – I understand that exposure to this can cause itchy eyes and nose and headaches, this is what people in Cowdenbeath complain about. People in Cowdenbeath have visited their Doctors with these symptoms, is this related to the recent leak?

We, the community, need to know if there are health effects from flaring?

*JM: There is no evidence that FEP has any impact on the health of local communities – we hope that NHS Fife will take steps to issue this evidence to provide much needed public reassurance.*

*In this particular instance, per modelling tools the ethane did not disperse beyond a 4m radius of the pipe and stayed fully within the plant itself. As such, there was no health risk to surrounding communities.*

**Cllr Altany Craik:** Lack of communication on these type of issues such as the gas leak, particularly during a period of such heightened community sensitivity creates further concern.

*SN: We totally agree that we need to do more to provide our public with the facts as well as reacting faster to issue information when required. We also agree it is important to find ways to reach the widest audience and we are working on that now – we would welcome any views on how we can improve how we do this.*

**Anne Smith:** You talk about your systems that you have in place, a key issue is that people outside of the plant, in the local communities don't know or understand the systems you have in place.

*SN: We agree that we need to do more to ensure our public have access to the facts – communicated in a non-technical way – to ensure we can build understanding and knowledge to address concerns.*

*We are working on a range of new materials now and will share these when they are at a more advanced stage.*

#### GENERAL Q&A

**Anne Smith:** Do Shell and ExxonMobil engage regularly on operational matters?

*CM: The two companies engage on a daily basis regarding a range of operational matters. At a corporate level, our two companies also meet to discuss wider and longer term strategic matters.*

**Cllr Altany Craik:** How do we get to a “community of understanding”?

*JM: We recognise we need to engage more and communicate more. We want to reach out directly to the public and would welcome input from those present on how we do that most effectively.*

**Anne Smith:**

I understand that flaring acts like a safety valve, so why then does it seem to happen quite often and for such long periods?

Flaring is a nuisance / causes fear of a major incident and with poor communication causes alarm in the communities.

What caused the gas leak, why was there corrosion in the pipe?

A final warning was issued by SEPA last year but there is no full understanding of what this means by people in the local community. I thought this meant further flaring would mean the plant would be shut down.

*JM:*

*Neither the frequency or volume of flaring is increasing. That said, 2%\* is too much – we want to avoid flaring wherever we can.*

*We have over 90 miles of piping at FEP. Our inspection regime is robust and is intended to identify pinhole leaks just like our recent example. We then risk assess and move to take whatever steps are required to maintain safe operations*

*The SEPA investigation is robust. They have already interviewed our teams for over 120 hours in relation to the April flaring event. They are doing their job. We must remember though that flaring is not only a recognised procedure, it is also permitted within our licence.*

**Liz Rae:**

Where do the representatives here from FEP around this table live?

Living in Cowdenbeath it has been fearful on occasions over the years. Children have been frightened by the noise and light and they should not have to live being frightened. I personally was once so alarmed when awoken from sleep by the flaring that I phoned the police to find out what was happening in Cowdenbeath.

*All:*

*Those in attendance live in Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline and Edinburgh. 70% of all employees live within ten miles of FEP*

*JM:*

*We do not want people to be concerned, and there is no reason why they should be. We are working to help people to better understand both our plant operations and our flare. We would value insight and views from those present to help us achieve this and talk about how best to do this.*

**Morag Campbell:** A lack of understanding about the operations of the site is a key issue in common in the communities. I attend the Liaison Committee, and I believe that other Community Councils need to work with the Liaison Committee and their communities to assist communications.

**Anne Smith:** It is not the community council's job to communicate for the companies; that is the company's job.

*SN: We absolutely agree that the Liaison Committee should be the primary source of public information and assurance. We know that Cllr Bain has been pushing hard for the right resource, and we have already offered funding to Fife Council to allow them to appoint e.g. a minute taker and develop a more effective website – we await their response to our offer.*

**Jim Martin:** Long ago I had “slick” on my garden pond after flaring and another instance when my caravan roof was covered in soot. Now the issue is the “jet engine” like noise when flaring is happening which causes concern.

*JM: Reports in April of dust on vehicles is recognised as being from the well-documented Sahara Sand that crossed parts of Scotland that weekend*

*We absolutely recognise that under high volume flaring, the sound can be loud and cause concern. Under our BAT programme we will be introducing a new flare tip next year. This is state of the art and will not only reduce noise – as it needs less steam, which is the cause of the noise – but will also significantly reduce vibration. This is just one of 14 improvements contained within the multi-million pound investment programme.*

**Anne Smith:** I thought we were going to have a plant tour this evening. The site needs to offer the community the opportunity of plant tours to demystify operations. (Anne and Brendan specifically requested a plant tour at a future date)

**CM:** *Agree that plant tours are a very effective way to demystify our operations. We have undertaken these for many years and will be opening up opportunities to the public in the coming weeks to come and visit*

**Jim Martin:** SEPA/HSE during recent flaring events claimed to have insufficient equipment to do air quality monitoring during recent flaring event.

Could drone technology be used to sample air quality during flaring?

**JM:** *SEPA has not advised us that they do not have sufficient equipment. It is important to note, however, that extensive data does exist to show the low levels of emissions from FEP. When we flare, it is essentially water and CO2 being emitted.*

**Liz Rae:** Can the communities get continuous air quality monitoring?

**JM:** *As data already exists to show there is no impact on health or environment from FEP we believe the extensive funding required to put this in place would be better used elsewhere to benefit communities*

**Cllr Alistair Bain:** There is lots of information already available already on Fife Direct and the SEPA websites. It would aid information sharing if community councils regularly and routinely attend the Liaison Committee and assist in sharing information / community concerns with this group and assist in advising local residents where information may be found.

**SN:** *We absolutely agree. An extensive range of data and evidence already exists but we need help to ensure this is better communicated to communities.*

**Jim Martin:** The community feel that SEPA need to do a better job, they seem to lack resource to be effective. The community have lost faith in SEPA.

*JM: SEPA are already quick to respond to any flaring events, deploying both noise and emissions monitoring.*

**Cllr Altany Craik:** Whilst there may be lots of data accessible, it needs to be in an informative and understandable format which has some credibility and is deemed impartial by the local community.

*SN: We agree. Data needs to be presented better, and it needs to be deployed by those bodies entrusted to provide public information and assurance – NHS Fife, Fife Council, Liaison Committee and Independent Air Quality Monitoring Group*

*We reiterate our commitment to providing funding – this could be paid into a trust – to assist with the independent communication of such material.*

**Cllr Altany Craik:** Motion 10 – Fife Council have at today's full Council meeting sent this back to the Scottish Government, as they (Fife Council) are unhappy with the initial response received. An independent enquiry into the operations of the site would give everyone the opportunity to put information into the community, but would need to address who carries out this work, who pays, who writes etc. in order for the community to accept the results.

*JM: The requirement for, as well as the scope and benefits of, an independent enquiry is something for Fife Council and Scottish Government to agree.*



- Anne Smith:** The environmental impact on Fife from the plant - environmental views, legislations etc. will continue changing in the future.
- How are ExxonMobil going to ensure they keep up and move on with the changes?
- SN:** *We recognise that environmental views are changing and that is why we need to ensure that the real facts are available. Furthermore, ExxonMobil already plays a huge global role in developing new energy solutions. Here in Scotland, FEP are well placed to play a part in the 'just transition' to future energy sources.*
- Emma Millar:** What does the plant do, what does it produce, what products does it go into that we would recognise?
- AB:** *Andy Bishop provided an insight into how ethylene is made. He then highlighted the ethylene is a non-toxic gas, which is used in the production of every day products such as mobile phones, computers, car parts, clothing and medical equipment and storage. Andy also referenced that ethylene is a naturally occurring gas – e.g. bananas give this off and it can ripen fruit in a bowl etc.*
- Jim Martin:** Historically there were promises of downstream jobs. During construction, jobs went to people from all over Scotland rather than locals. But need to stop the recent talk of decommissioning the plant. The plant supports jobs and lots of smaller suppliers in local support industries, so need the site needs to communicate what benefits it brings to the local area.
- SN:** *FEP does still provide hundreds of direct, contractor and supply chain employment. With many more employed by our neighbours Shell. The jobs at FEP are secure, skilled and very well-paid. This is something that Fife and Scotland needs.*

**Cllr Altany Craik:** Sought to clarify the Motion 10 wording on 'decommissioning' of Mossmorran – this was not what was intended, did not intend to threaten jobs. With the green revolution what was needed was to look at what does the future look like overall for Fife and its industries including that of the site.

*JM: Appreciate the clarification but it did cause concern for our hundreds of workers and their families. FEP is a strategic asset in the ExxonMobil global portfolio and has many years of operational life ahead. ExxonMobil are committed to Fife but also committed to working with Government to see where it can play a role in future energy supply.*

**Morag Campbell:** What lessons did the site learn from the leak – what communications would you do differently?

*JM: We need to better ensure that the facts - not misinformation and scaremongering – are heard by the public*

**Peter Milmore:** What effect will Brexit have on FEP?

*AB It's on our radar and we keep watching this along with the rest of the country. We have robust contingency planning in place for any potential impact on the movement of product.*

**Anne Smith /  
Brendan Burns:** Are visits for elected representatives and the public allowed to the plant?

Also are there plans for a visitor centre with information?

**CM:** For many years, we have invited members of the public to visit the plant to learn more about our operations and meet our team. They have always been well-received and we are looking to undertake another round of visits this year.

As part of these visits we do share a range of information within our training centre

## CONCLUSION

Jacob McAlister thanked all in attendance for the open and honest dialogue. Common themes over the evening centred on improved communication from the site both during an event and in routine operations, as well as steps to better inform communities on what FEP does. FEP would like to work with Councillors on how best to make this happen, and ensure we reach the widest possible audience.

### **Follow up actions:**

FEP to liaise and offer site visits to Community Councils.

Public meetings to be sought via Community Councils.

New communication materials to be shared with attendees for feedback.

**Action: CC**

\*Of the total hours operated by FEP in the last decade, the plant operated its flare for just 2% of this time