

Relevant minutes from Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Council meeting - 29th February, 2016.

Item 12 - A Motion in the name of Councillor Michael Goodman -

That this Council notes that Woodburn Reservoir in Carrickfergus supplies water to a significant portion of the Newtownabbey area and expresses concern that Infrastrata have been granted permission to conduct exploratory petroleum drilling at this location using harmful chemicals; it notes that the current law governing permitted development in Northern Ireland is less robust than in England, where petroleum exploration requires planning permission and notes further that 75% of fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground to prevent dangerous climate change and does not regard this process as in line with the legal requirement of the DOE in Article 1 of the 2011 Planning Act to further sustainable development.

This Council therefore expresses concern that no Strategic Environmental Assessment has been conducted by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry ahead of the adoption of a petroleum exploration plan or the issuing of the East Antrim Petroleum Exploration License.

Accordingly, the Council calls upon the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Minister for the Environment and Mid and East Antrim Council to urgently review the decision to grant permitted development for exploratory drilling in Woodburn Forest with a view to reversing that permission and for the Minister for the Environment to amend the law so that petroleum exploration always requires full planning permission.”

Moved by Councillor Goodman

Seconded by Councillor McClelland that the Motion be carried.

AMENDMENT

Moved by Councillor Brett

Seconded by Alderman Cosgrove that

The Council notes that Woodburn Reservoir in Carrickfergus supplies water to a significant number of properties in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough and that representatives from the opposition groups and Northern Ireland Water be invited to present to a future meeting.

On the Amendment being put to the meeting 24 members voted in favour and 6 against.
The Amendment was carried as the substantive motion.

AMENDMENT

Moved by Councillor Duffin

Seconded by Councillor McClelland that

The Council notes that Woodburn Reservoir in Carrickfergus supplies water to a significant portion of the Newtownabbey area and expresses concern that Infrastrata have been granted permission to conduct exploratory petroleum drilling at this location using harmful chemicals; it notes that the current law governing permitted development in Northern Ireland is less robust than in England, where petroleum exploration requires planning permission and notes further that 75% of fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground to prevent dangerous climate change.

This Council expresses concern that no Strategic Environmental Assessment has been conducted by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry ahead of the adoption of a petroleum exploration plan or the issuing of the East Antrim Petroleum Exploration License.

Accordingly, the Council calls upon the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Minister for the Environment and Mid and East Antrim Council to urgently review the decision to grant permitted development for exploratory drilling in Woodburn Forest with a view to reversing that permission and for the Minister for the Environment to amend the law so that petroleum exploration always requires full planning permission.”

On the amendment being put to the meeting 7 members voted for, 22 against and 1 abstention. The Amendment was accordingly declared lost.

Council meeting - 25th April, 2016.

9.1 Attendances by Northern Ireland Water representatives and ‘Stop the Drill’ representatives

Members were reminded that it was agreed at the February Council meeting that the representatives from Northern Ireland Water and the Stop the Drill Campaign be invited to present to the Council. The following representatives were in attendance:

Northern Ireland Water - Mr Alec McQuillan, Ms Dymphna Gallagher & Mr Maynard Cousley
Stop the Drill - Ms Fiona Joyce and Ms Majella McCarron

The Mayor welcomed all representatives to the meeting with both presentations highlighting the undernoted points:-

Northern Ireland Water

- Vision - “to be a valued and trusted provider of one of Northern Ireland’s most essential public services; an organisation our customers and staff are proud of”.
- Safety / monitoring of drinking water supply is top priority.
- Dorisland WTW Catchment management / liaison with other statutory agencies / private land ownership / leasing to Forest Service and Farmers.
- Exploratory drilling site / daily sample analytical testing / water drawn from the catchment for treatment is surface water / no residual risk to drinking water supply.
- Oil Spill inspections and assessments / risks associated with hazards / mitigation measures.
- Drinking water safety plans / World Health Organisation guidance / Drinking Water Regulations / reassurance.

Stop the Drill

- Campaign - “to protect the water catchment area in the Woodburn Forest and the nearby North Woodburn Reservoir from a 50 year agreement between Northern Ireland Water and the oil company Infrastrata”.
- The need for protection of the water catchment area.
- DETI - due diligence / conflicts of interest / legislation.
- Permitted Development Rights / Environmental Impact Assessment / traffic management / Waste Management Plan
- Lack of community consultation / trust.
- Risks /contaminations associated with exploratory drilling and spills.
- Judicial Review being progressed by concerned resident against Mid and East Antrim Council.
- Request for Super Council(s) to support the campaign in calling for permitted development rights/licenses to be revoked.

During the presentations representatives from NI Water responded to enquiries from Members elaborating as necessary. The representatives assured members that the water quality had not been affected since the site work began, and undertook to provide a monthly update on the water quality to the Council throughout the exploratory drilling process.