

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (APPEALS) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013  
APPEAL UNDER SECTION 47(2) OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT  
1997 BY DART ENERGY (FORTH VALLEY) LTD CONCERNING COAL BED METHANE  
PRODUCTION, INCLUDING DRILLING, WELL SITE ESTABLISHMENT AT 14 LOCATIONS AND  
ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE AT LETHAM MOSS, FALKIRK, AND POWDRAKE ROAD, NEAR  
AIRTH, PLEAN  
(REFERENCES PPA-240-2032 AND PPA-390-2029)**

**PRECOGNITION BY STEVEN CARLESCHI  
ON BEHALF OF  
CONCERNED COMMUNITIES OF FALKIRK  
(AND SUPPORTERS)**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. I have been an elected member of Falkirk Council for the Carse, Kinnaird & Tryst Ward for the past 7 years. In that time I have worked closely with residents on a number of local issues that has caused concern within the community. I became aware of the application for Coal Bed Methane Extraction by Dart Energy in September 2012 when I was contacted by various constituents who had received neighbour notification letters of the proposed development in close proximity to their homes. Ever since I have been working with CCOF and residents both locally and in the wider Falkirk community who have contacted me regarding this. I endorsed the Community Charter created by CCOF and got agreement for all members of my SNP council group to sign it.
2. In my evidence I will outline the concerns residents have raised with me in relation to the application and, due to the proximity of the application to housing (existing and proposed), the risks to their sense of security, amenity, health and well being for now and future generations. I will give an overview of the projected increases in population and house building in the area that is proposed directly adjacent to the application area. I will also touch on the effects this will have to the rural villages that will bound these sites and the protection that has been put in place with regards to new development for this which this application will put at risk.

**EVIDENCE**

3. Since Dart Energy first released plans for their application for Coal Bed Methane Extraction at Letham Moss I have been inundated with queries on this matter
4. I have been contacted by 100s of constituents who are concerned about the effects this development will have on their community. They are concerned about the proximity of this development to their homes. They are aware of other countries where Coal Bed Methane Extraction has been undertaken measures have been put in place to create buffer zones between their homes and this sort of unconventional gas extraction.
5. Constituents have raised concerns at how the local roads networks can cope with additional pressures from a development of this scale on the doorstep. Over the last 20 years there has been significant housing development particularly in the Larbert

area which has placed a lot of pressure on the local road network. It is felt this development will further exacerbate these problems. A lot of the road network near the site are smaller country roads and will not be able to cope with the level of traffic generated from this development. My constituents have grave safety concerns regarding this and how it will be managed if the application is granted.

6. The local area's population has grown rapidly in recent years. At the Kinnaird Village site adjacent to the application area 800 houses have already been constructed with another 700 houses and a business park planned over the next 5 – 10 years. This will represent a 19% increase in the local population. These will put further pressures on all local services such as roads. This new development at Hill of Kinnaird which construction started at the end of 2013 will be between the existing Kinnaird Development and the application site and so will be more negatively impacted by the development than even the existing housing in the local area.
7. Many constituents that have contacted me have raised concerns regarding their own safety and that of their children's from this development. They feel there are still many unanswered questions over safety protections such as damage this development could bring to the environment in which they live. They do not feel they have been sufficiently reassured about the effects this development may have to local people and the environment in general. While I recognise these areas will be dealt with in the public inquiry in the relevant areas it is important to note the very real concerns local people have on the effects this development could have in these matters.
8. They are also conscious Letham Moss itself is an area with many positive environmental attributes. They feel its open landscape adds to the character of the area and that could be destroyed if this development is granted.
9. There are also concerns for the health and well being of local residents from the effects of this development. These range from pollution to possible side effects of these works from studies they have read on the effects to other local areas when this method of unconventional gas extraction is used. While again these will be covered in the relevant areas of this public inquiry they are still real concerns that local people are expressing to me on the outcome of this application being granted.
10. Local people are concerned about the loss of amenity resulting from the development. The area of Letham Moss is a rural tranquil place which the surrounding housing areas mutually benefit from. It is greenbelt land which is not zoned for any sort of development to act as a buffer zone between the communities of Larbert and Airth. The loss of this area local residents feel will significantly alter their amenity which was one of the many reasons a lot of these residents chose this area to live and bring their family up there.
11. Concern has also been raised on the Built heritage. Letham Moss is bounded on one side by the Conservation Village of Letham. This has been applauded as a great example of architecture of its type. There is a concern that its setting will be destroyed by an application of this kind which will be out of keeping with its conservation status. Also overlooking the application area is Airth Castle a building that can trace its routes back to 11<sup>th</sup> Century. Many demands to build on land the Castle overlooks to the rear have been prevented in recent years with agencies such

as Historic Scotland objecting to such proposals. If this development were granted this would also affect the setting of a building that has played a key part in Scotland's history.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

12. In summary I have been contacted by 100s of residents who all share the same concerns on this development. I have yet to have representations from a single constituent who is in favour in any way to these proposals.
13. My constituents' main concerns which I whole heartily share on this application are as follows. The proximity of their homes to the proposed development. The pressure on the local infrastructure such as roads which they feel will struggle to cope with the increased traffic a development of this type will generate. The fact there is already a planned increase in housing in the area which will be closer to the application site than even the current development at Kinnaird Village. Concern over the many unanswered questions on the application which they feel will put at risk their safety and those of their children. The damage to the local environment that they feel this application will bring. And finally they are also concerned on the built heritage at both Letham and Airth which they have worked hard to protect against other proposed developments over the years.

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