



# DON'T DRILL THE HILL

## A Voice for Leith Hill

January 2018



Welcome to our fourth Newsletter full of up-to-date information about local campaigns against oil-drilling. It's information that you rarely find in mainstream media.

Read on, find out more and join us by helping in any way you can.

### LEGAL VICTORY FOR LEITH HILL ACTION GROUP ON FENCING AT THE SITE

Europa Oil & Gas no longer have permission to erect extra buildings and fencing for security purposes or to enlarge the site beyond that approved by the Planning Inspector in August 2015. This is because Surrey County Council recently signed a Consent Order to allow the Courts to quash SCC's October decision to approve Europa's application.

Why?

In October 2017 SCC's Planning and Regulatory Committee voted to approve Europa's fencing application for the proposed drill site at Coldharbour Lane, Leith Hill although it was legally contentious. Leith Hill Action Group responded by informing SCC that they would take this decision to Judicial Review because:

- 1.Green Belt planning regulations severely restrict development but SCC accepted Europa's claim that the fence and buildings were for "mineral extraction" and thus not necessarily inappropriate.
- 2.To avoid being "inappropriate", developments in these few categories have to "maintain openness". Surrey County Council had agreed that there would be "(limited) harm to openness" and yet they still decided the development wasn't inappropriate. Before it went to court SCC agreed with LHAG's arguments on point 2 and decided to withdraw their consent for Europa's plans. They have agreed to pay LHAG's full costs.

### NEWS FROM THE PROTECTION CAMP



Find us opposite the entrance to the intended drill site, about half a mile east of Coldharbour Village.



Over a year ago a camp was set up to occupy the intended drill site, defending it with the fortress, tree houses, and tunnel system. A team of specialist bailiffs took two days to evict us and attracted attention from national and local media.

So we then moved over the road.

The Camp currently keeps watch on the site, alerting the wider community to any activity or new suppliers. Along with countless supporters from the wider community we've run a very successful campaign to put pressure on suppliers to withdraw from the project. To date six have withdrawn. The most recent success was when a heavy goods vehicle was brought up, loaded with a portacabin, despite the Traffic Management Plan not being approved. Activists persuaded the supplier to pull out and announce that they would not supply the industry in future. Many suppliers are small local companies who are not aware of what they're getting involved with and are horrified once they find out.

A big part of the new camp's work is to talk to visitors and passers-by and make more people aware of the plans to drill and what they can do to stop them. Visitors range from regular supporters to cyclists, walkers and tourists, many of whom are unaware of the plans to drill here.

We run events and workshops and are a hub for opposition to unconventional oil in Surrey - see Leith Hill Protection Camp Facebook page for details of upcoming events. You are very welcome to pop in for tea, coffee and a chat, any day!

### THE BATTLE CONTINUES—MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

The threatened drill on Leith Hill is now embroiled in a fast-moving set of legal & planning proceedings.

On 5 January 2018 Europa resubmitted their Traffic Management Plan to Surrey County Council. You can view it here <https://planning.surreycc.gov.uk/planappdisp.aspx?AppNo=SCC%20Ref%202017/0212>. It's SCC Ref 2017/0212. Please make every effort to comment on the application by February 7<sup>th</sup>. A guide to objecting will soon be available on the Voice for Leith Hill website.

Europa Oil and Gas is keen to get on with it as their planning permission for the 18 week exploratory drill expires in August. So they're challenging Surrey County Council for - they claim - unreasonably delaying a decision on the Traffic Management Plan for the site. The TMP involves hundreds of HGV movements in a narrow and historic sunken lane with protected trees on each side. The courts could sidestep the democratic process, which is what Europa might be hoping.

#### Our survey

Local residents in Dorking hadn't been consulted by Europa in 10 years despite having the threat of heavy lorries past their doors. So A Voice for Leith Hill supporters knocked on doors in the roads most directly affected and sent the results of our survey to Surrey and Mole Valley councillors. Email us to see the results. Shortly afterwards Europa did its own perfunctory door knocking - after being reprimanded by the Chair of the Surrey Planning Committee.

#### And an injunction???

Europa has also applied to the courts for an extension to their injunction on the drill site, which was granted on January 8 2017. This has made little difference to the campaign against drilling so far, as the Protection Camp simply moved to the other side of the road.

MEP Keith Taylor has set up a Weald-wide survey to assess how good the oil companies are at consulting local residents. It doesn't take long and every voice will count. Make your voice heard. <https://tinyurl.com/y3yhtwz>

### The Gruffalo Blues: a story for children of all ages

Turn up the volume at <http://www.leithhillblues.co.uk/>

There has been a fantastic response to our song so far, particularly on social media channels, but up to this point it has not prompted a response from Julia or Axel. Anyone who can spare a few minutes PLEASE join us in contacting the Macmillan PR team. Details of how to do this are here:

<http://www.leithhillblues.co.uk/how-to-help>



## EVENTS

**Sat 20th Jan:** 'Know your rights' session in Dorking RH4 1DP. Please book online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/know-your-rights-training-tickets-41365645760>

**Fri 2nd Feb, 8pm:** 'Gig Against the Rig' Fundraiser for LHAG legal fund, with The Salts. NOW SOLD OUT but drop in and see the brilliant photographic & art exhibition at the Plough 2nd-8th Feb.

**Weds 7th Feb:** Evening social at the lovely Narnia Room (The Old House, Dorking, RH4 1BY). 7:30-10pm for chats, news & the chance to meet others who are concerned about the drilling plans. Bar and food available, drop in any time.

**Sat 10th Feb:** Family-friendly daytime social upstairs at Burgundy & Black cafe, St Martin's Walk, Dorking RH4 1DP, 10am-1pm. Games for children, a chance for adults to chat & share news and ideas.

**Sat 17th Feb:** Legal Observer refresher day. Details TBC—see the A Voice for Leith Hill website.

**Mon March 5th:** Voice for Leith Hill Fundraiser Quiz Night at the Rialto, Dorking RH4 2JZ. 7.30pm. £10, to include main meal and light-hearted quiz. Come as a team of 8 or join up when you're there. Buy through Coldharbour Village shop, the Protection Camp on Coldharbour Lane or by emailing [pat-voice@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pat-voice@yahoo.co.uk).

## WHO ARE UKOG?

Europa Oil & Gas is the public face of the project to drill Leith Hill, but there's another company behind the scenes. UK Oil and Gas (UKOG) recently announced they were increasing their stake in the project to 40%. This makes them the major stakeholder.

So who are they? They're an oil and gas company whose Chairman & CEO Stephen Sanderson has spoken enthusiastically about rolling out industrialised oil production across the Weald.

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zBAD-EJHyk>]. He is a proponent of fracking who has complained that the current regulations on fracking will restrict future oil extraction across the Weald.

UKOG is involved in new oil extraction projects at Horse Hill near Horley in Surrey and Broadford Bridge near Billingshurst in West Sussex. At Horse Hill, during an initial period of test drilling in 2016, residents complained of breathing problems and nosebleeds. These concerns were sidelined in a recent planning meeting where consent was granted for further test drilling.

At Billingshurst, UKOG's operations have been plagued by problems, notably well flooding and cement bonding. Residents have also complained that the company have been operating at weekends and night-times.

UKOG's financial stability has also been questioned by some. To fund their projects at Billingshurst, Horse Hill and Leith Hill in the absence of recent positive news for investors, they recently announced they had arranged a £10 million loan. The loan company can buy shares at discount prices and sell them at full market price.

## WEALD WIDE WATCH

**Brockham:** Angus Energy are seeking retrospective planning permission from Surrey County Council for sidetrack BRX-4Z which they drilled without permission. They say they will re-start production from the BRX-2Y well in March and plan to sell gas to the National Grid. (RNS 15th January 2018).

**Billingshurst (Broadford Bridge):** West Sussex County Council approved a 12 month extension to operations in September. There have been several delays caused by a 'washed out' well and issues with cement bonding.

UKOG recently announced that they want to acquire 2 more sites nearby.

**Horse Hill (Horley):** UKOG are preparing for more flow testing in 2018. The site was occupied by activists in December for 3 days before being evicted by specialist bailiffs.

**Markwells Wood (South Downs):** UKOG withdrew a previous application after residents funded a hydrogeological survey that raised concerns about water pollution, but said they will submit a scaled back application. Oil and Gas Authority supremos granted a production licence without having to go through due process and bypassing the local council.

**Balcombe (Sussex):** Cuadrilla, who are also working on a fracking site in Lancashire, have just been granted a licence to flow test in Balcombe.

**Lidsey (nr Bognor):** Angus Energy recently suffered a set back after having to announce disappointing flow test results for this site. Their RNS on 15th Jan 2018 stated they plan to re-commence production in Feb 2018 after installing a new pump.

**Don't forget Albury, Godstone, Godley Bridge & Baxter's Copse (W. Sussex) & Isle of Wight.** See website 'Drill or Drop' for further details.

## HISTORY OF THE FIGHT AGAINST OIL

Back in 2008 Europa Gas & Oil applied to carry out an exploratory drill at Bury Hill Woods on Leith Hill.

Local parish and district councils, the National Trust, the local water authority and thousands of individuals objected to the proposal. Despite this and the tireless work of local lobby group **Leith Hill Action Group**, permission was eventually granted by the Govt Planning Inspectorate in 2014.

**A Voice for Leith Hill** started with a picnic on the proposed wellsite in 2015. It's a community group that feels that this beautiful woodland area needs a voice.

Following approval in 2014, Europa have had to submit detailed plans for development and every word and drawing has been scrutinised by LHAG, A Voice for Leith Hill and other groups. Inconsistencies and inaccuracies have been exposed and this fight has continued for the last 3 years.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP: It's time to step forward and send us an email.

- **Tell everyone**, write letters, display leaflets, posters and car stickers and **come to events**.
- **Join our food rota** to cook for the Protection Camp.
- **Volunteer** for our street-by-street surveys and information stalls.
- **Save annual leave** to show your support for any peaceful protest if and when work starts on the site.
- **Train** to find out more about your rights as a volunteer or peaceful protestor / train as a Legal Observer.
- **Find out more.** Drill or Drop, LHAG, A Voice for Leith Hill, Leith Hill Protection Camp, Brockham Oil Watch & Weald Action Group have excellent and informative websites and/ or Facebook pages.
- **Share your special skills.** Social media / organising events / PR / woodworking / design etc etc... Don't be shy! Email [info@voiceforleithhill](mailto:info@voiceforleithhill) or [patvoice@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:patvoice@yahoo.co.uk) with any questions/offers of help.

**Website:** [www.voiceforleithhill.co.uk](http://www.voiceforleithhill.co.uk) / **Email:** [info@voiceforleithhill.co.uk](mailto:info@voiceforleithhill.co.uk) / **Facebook** A Voice for Leith Hill