

Frack Free Balcombe Residents Association congratulates West Sussex County Council Planning Committee for their recent unanimous decision to refuse Angus Energy's application to extract drilling fluids and conduct an extended well test at Lower Stumble, Balcombe.

The Planning Committee unanimously decided that Angus Energy's application did not meet the necessary criteria of exceptional circumstances and being in the public interest to permit a major development in a protected place, in this case the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This underlines the positive actions West Sussex County Council has taken to move towards cleaner, greener sources of energy, with the development of two solar arrays and a forthcoming battery storage unit.

It is also the latest chapter in the 10 year saga of oil development applications in the West Sussex village of Balcombe, which saw major protests in 2013. Cuadrilla Balcombe Ltd sold 25% of their interest in PEDL 244 to Angus Energy in 2018, and Angus took over as operator of PEDL 244.

On behalf of Frack Free Balcombe Residents Association, Sue Taylor says: 'This verdict is such a relief. Thanks to all the hard work of so many people, the situation is looking positive for Balcombe.'

Balcombe resident Jon Millbanks hopes this is the end of the story of oil exploration in Balcombe. 'We shall be heartily glad to see the back of oil companies in the village,' he said. 'They have blighted village life for ten years, and threatened us with increased HGV traffic, noise and fumes from drilling and flaring. Now the children at our excellent local primary school will not have to put up with idling HGVs spewing out noxious fumes, metres from their classrooms and playground, as they wait to go down to the well-site.'

Malcolm Kenward, another resident and a staunch supporter of REPOWERBalcombe, the local renewable electricity generating co-operative, is also glad to see this application opposed. 'We're far better off generating electricity from solar panels than looking for more fossil fuels,' Kenward said. 'The world needs to change the way it thinks about how we generate energy. We have to look forward, not backwards, otherwise our children and grandchildren will face a hugely depleted planet.'

For further comments and quotes, please contact Sue Taylor, 01444 819329, or Louisa Delpy 01444 811534.