

## ReFINE – Continuing Professional Development - 13 September

### Event Summary

Unconventional Hydrocarbons and the issues of regulation, planning, local power and democracy

The first CPD seminar was a great success. Here is a summary of the key themes and discussions from the day.

#### The ambitions of the event

The event started with an introduction by Professor Anthony Zito who set out the ambitions of the Erasmus+ grant, which is intended to bring together practitioners and academics to discuss timely issues with regards to shale gas extraction in the UK. This was followed by an outline of the legal and regulatory framework, including the planning regime presented by Dr Ole Pedersen and Dr Joanne Hawkins.

#### The focus of the panel discussions

The morning lectures helped structure the panel discussion in the afternoon, which was focused on the role of the regulator. The panel members comprised Paul Bradley (HSE), Paul Leinster (Cranfield University) and John Barraclough (Environment Agency). One of the interesting things that came out of the panel discussion was that, on the whole, the regulators and those who govern over this area are working within normal parameters and procedures. At the same time, given the experimental and technological innovation inherent in the early processes, the regulators are expending a comparatively high effort, for example, at public engagement, site visits and so forth. The question still remains, if we see a shift in and growth in the operations, how much capacity is there to cope with an expansion of effort and the related expansion of public/media attention?

#### The Regulators and Policy Makers Strategic Focus

One of the frequent themes of the CPD event, was the question of strategy. There was a clear consensus around the room that there is an urgent need for a comprehensive strategy, not simply about hydraulic fracturing but across all elements of energy supply and usage. However, this raises something that we have generally not discussed although Dr. Hawkins raised in her slides, namely the issue of Brexit. There is a real question of whether the political parties and Whitehall have the capacity to work out such a strategy in the next 5 years, particularly in light of all the other policy areas that urgently need strategies.

#### The Impact of Brexit

The Brexit issue then leads us onto another key theme. As we have seen in the past in environmental politics and policies, it may well be that events like Chernobyl and Seveos are going to have to act as triggers for policy. We have seen the implications of a short blackout, does an extended blackout in London have to happen to generate a strategy?

#### Understanding the Communication and Language Challenges

One of the themes that came up in the session was the question of language, or more specifically the differences in perceptions about what particular terms and language mean. One example is the

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discussion about how regulators and academics see what co-production of regulation means. In terms of regulation and policy, the discussion flagged up a lot of important words where there are clear differences in how the public, for instance, understand risk. There are also issues of terms used by experts, such as unconventional and fracking, that seem in danger of exacerbating differences.

These kinds of issues then raised the question of how control and input in the planning and regulatory process actually happens, and how trust can be built with the general public but also industry and the other actors. How do we create a type of forum that can bridge these issues? What are the roles of academics and the other groups in creating the discussion that can bridge the differences?

## Finally....Thank you

Thank you to all the participants, both speakers and audience, for their great contributions which helped to make the discussion so lively and informative. Thanks to Liz Kirkup for all her organisational support.

**Professor Anthony Zito, Professor Richard Davies and Rachel Brown**



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