

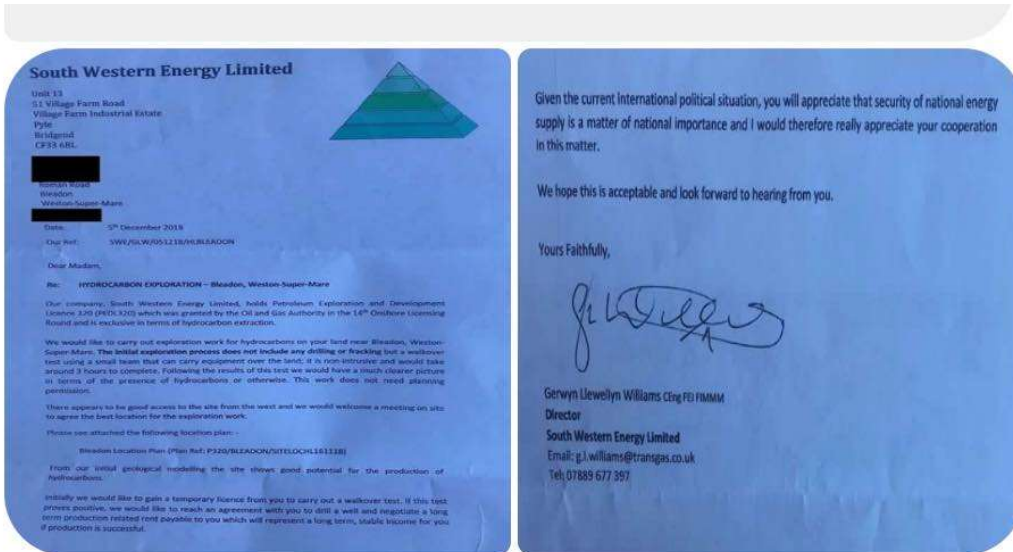
# DRILL OR DROP?

INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM ON UK FRACKING, ONSHORE OIL AND GAS AND THE REACTIONS TO IT

INDUSTRY

## Driller seeks land access for Somerset surveys and prepares for stock market listing

BY RUTH HAYHURST ON FEBRUARY 8, 2019 • ( 15 COMMENTS )



Landowners on the edge of the Mendip hills in Somerset have been approached by an oil and gas explorer, who wants to test for hydrocarbons.

Gerwyn Williams, of South Western Energy, is looking to carry out initial surveys in advance of drilling.

The news emerged as one of Mr Williams' companies is preparing to list on the main London Stock Exchange.

# “Walkover survey”

Mr Williams (right) told DrillOrDrop that he had written and spoken to “a few landowners” near the Somerset coast.

In one letter, which appeared online, the company asked for permission to do a “walkover survey” on land near Bleadon, south east of Weston-Super-Mare.



Photo: DrillOrDrop

The letter, signed by Mr Williams, said:

“The initial exploration process does not include any drilling or fracking but a walkover test using a small team that can carry equipment. It is not intrusive and would take about three hours to complete.

“Following the results of this test we would have a much clearer picture .... of the presence of hydrocarbons or otherwise. This work does not need planning permission.”

The company offered a short-term rental agreement for the land, potentially followed by a longer lease for drilling and production:

“Initially we would like to gain a temporary licence from you to carry out a walkover test. If this test proves positive, we would like to reach an agreement with you to drill a well and negotiate a long-

term production-related rent payable to you which will represent a long-term stable income for you if production is successful.”

The letter concluded:

“Given the current international political situation, you will appreciate that security of national energy supply is a matter of national importance and I would therefore really appreciate your cooperation in this matter.”

Frack Free North Somerset has established that at least two landowners in the parish of Bleadon had been contacted by the company. The group said both had declined the rental offer. A large, but unspecified rental fee had been mentioned, the group said.

The issue is likely to be discussed next week at the meeting of Bleadon parish council (Monday 11 February 2019) and by Frack Free North Somerset at its planning meeting (Tuesday 12 February 2019).

## Company's commitments



This is the first public information for more than two years about South Western Energy's plans for Somerset. To keep licences, PEDL320, 321 and 344, the company must drill three wells by July 2021.

The Oil and Gas Authority identified the target hydrocarbon in the licences as shale gas. And in 2016, Mr Williams told the BBC

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-38173867>):

“We know quite a lot about the geology in Somerset and we feel it can produce gas. I’m not going to give up until we see gas being produced from the areas we’ve been working on.”

But Gerwyn Williams told DrillOrDrop this week:

“The surveys are looking for the presence of oil. We know there is oil there because it was mined in the past. It is heavy oil and it is difficult to get out of the ground.”

Asked about shale gas, Mr Williams said:

“I would not rule it out in the future.”

Mr Williams said the tests were not seismic surveys, which use sound waves to build up pictures of the geology of an area.

He said the company had ideas of where it wanted to carry out the tests but when we asked about the locations he said:

“I cannot tell you. It is very confidential”.

He also said the company was developing technology, which he said, would “do away with the need for exploratory drilling”. He said:

“We think this [exploratory drilling] is a waste of time. It just upsets people. We are going straight to production. We are going to revolutionise the industry.”

Asked how this would work, Mr Williams replied:

“I cannot tell you.”

He said he had not submitted any planning applications to Somerset County Council. A Freedom of Information request last year confirmed

there had not been pre-application discussions with the council but the company had been invited to brief officers and councillors about its plans.

Richard Lawson, of Frack Free North Somerset, said

“The central thing that will, or should, kill this attempt to extract is that it is actually on the Mendip Hills, which are fissured limestone.

So any drilling, particularly fracking, will inevitably contaminate the interconnected waterways that run through the limestone, importantly to Banwell, where Weston super Mare derives much of its water, and to the tourist areas of Cheddar, Wookey and Wells.

“A plan to frack in Keynsham, on the other end of the Mendips, was abandoned because it would contaminate the Roman Baths at Bath.”

## Stock market listing

Mr Williams is listed with Companies House as a director of at least 20 businesses.

He and his family own Transgas Limited, the parent company of South Western Energy. He is also a director and shareholder of Infinity Energy.

In October 2017, Infinity Energy announced

(<https://www.investegate.co.uk/infinity-energy-s-a---inft-/prn/potential-acquisition/20171017150941P8ED9/>) that negotiations were ongoing to acquire Transgas Limited. Just under a year later, Infinity Energy confirmed (<https://www.investegate.co.uk/infinity-energy-s-a---inft-/prn/market-update/20180911150226PCD80/>) the discussions were “advanced” to “acquire a stake in Transgas Limited by means of a “share for share” transaction”.

In the meantime, in February 2018, Infinity Energy, which is incorporated in Luxembourg, announced (<https://www.investegate.co.uk/infinity-energy-s-a---inft-/prn/update---intention-to-seek-listing-on-standard-list/20180209103953P1816/>) it intended to apply for a standard listing on the London Stock Exchange. It cancelled (<https://www.investegate.co.uk/infinity-energy-s-a---inft-/prn/cancellation-of->

trading-on-aim/20180410151656P0183/) its membership of the junior AIM market in April 2018

# Other operations

In September 2016, South Western Energy pulled out

(<https://drillordrop.com/2016/09/14/breaking-sw-energy-gives-up-forest-of-dean-and-wiltshire-exploration-licences/>) of exploration licences in Wiltshire and the Forest of Dean. At the time, Mr Williams cited low energy prices but campaigners against the industry said they thought local opposition was important.

Other of Mr Williams' companies relinquished two licences in south Wales in 2016. Four licences in Kent were relinquished in 2015 when the Environment Agency indicated that it was unlikely to grant environmental permits for coalbed methane drilling.

In England, South Western Energy continues to hold two licences in Dorset.

## 15 replies »

Sounds really dodgy. Would you buy a used car from this m

REPLY

---

[Edited by moderator] tried to invade Kent,in 2011..we sav

REPLY

Kent is a frackfree zone.

[Comment by another contributor removed]

No, Kent would rather cover 1000 acres of the Saxon sh  
with solar panels which just provide intermittent energy, why not  
allow fracking for a reliable source (not that there is much Shale  
in Kent as far as I'm aware so quite what you "saw off" I don't  
know).

REPLY

Kent of course has one of the biggest LNG import and storage  
facilities on the Isle of Grain. During the recent cold spell, about  
12% of our gas was imported, mainly from the USA and Qatar.  
Most of the gas from the USA would have been fracked gas.

In the meantime average energy bills will be £115 higher this  
year. The price of gas on the world market will inevitably rise as  
the political pressure to curb pollution in China and SE Asian  
countries creates a massive demand for clean gas; essentially it's  
what happened in Britain after the 1950's smogs, replace  
polluting coal with cleaner gas.

"We are going to revolutionise the industry."

REPLY

He also said the company was developing technology, which  
he said, would "do away with the need for exploratory drilling".

No need to drill anything anywhere. Patent this idea that global energy companies have never thought of and sell it for billions.

Talk the talk, collect the money, no intention or capability of walking the walk.

Seems to work. Mug punters and their money are easily parted.

I think I will have a go.....'I am going to 'revolutionise the liquid storage industry'

I have just invented the perfect storage solution. I have developed a system using Tardis technology. Pour a million gallons through my revolutionary 'Tardis valve' and the water is collected in a 1 litre sized Tardis bottle. Easy storage and to recover the million gallons reverse the system.

Do not hesitate. Send me your money now, I will use it for development and may give you back lots more than you gave me.

Cheques to 'Tardis technology development programme limited, subsidiary of 'Tardis group holdings' of the Cayman Isles.

,

Stop mocking the Emperor..after all, if HM Gov; be  
can successfully transport trucks via Ramsgate without any  
boats, why not the above?

REPLY

Ferry problem sorted. At least they have boats

REPLY

<https://www.loonyparty.com/4310/6530/ferry-contract/> (<https://www.loonyparty.com/4310/6530/ferry-contract/>)



---

'No, Kent would rather cover 1000 acres of the Saxo shoreline with solar panels which just provide intermittent energy, why not allow fracking for a reliable source (not that there is much Shale in Kent as far as I'm aware so quite what you "saw off" I don't know).' – pointless answer; UK shale isn't reliable, even intermittent, just non-existent.

REPLY

'Kent of course has one of the biggest LNG import and storage facilities on the Isle of Grain. During the recent cold spell, about 12% of our gas was imported, mainly from the USA and Qatar.' – yes, this is the government's plan; they are not interested in UK shale.

'In the meantime average energy bills will be £115 higher this year.' – that's because of greedy yacht owners....did you know best sited onshore wind is now the cheapest energy generation?

'The price of gas on the world market will inevitably rise ' – only if you keep wasting it to produce electricity...

---

Fascinating article Ruth, thank you. There seem to be a of unspoken sub plots about this proposal to frack the south west.

REPLY

Firstly the methodology proposed to: (apologies for the copy and paste)

"Mr Williams said the tests were not seismic surveys, which use sound waves to build up pictures of the geology of an area.

He said the company had ideas of where it wanted to carry out the tests but when we asked about the locations he said:

"I cannot tell you. It is very confidential".

He also said the company was developing technology, which he said, would "do away with the need for exploratory drilling". He said:

"We think this [exploratory drilling] is a waste of time. It just upsets people. We are going straight to production. We are going

to revolutionise the industry.”

Asked how this would work, Mr Williams replied:

“I cannot tell you.””

That means applying for an up front production licence, and the conditions for that are far more stringent than the “get out of jail free” rubber stamp job which is the usual excuse for an exploratory licence, but we all know that an exploratory licence is nothing of the sort, it is an intention for production as we have established prior to this.

Then we have to ask, what is this mysterious “developing technology”?

Is it the high pressure steam wash we have seen alluded to here?

The ill defined and illusive term “proppant squeeze” perhaps?

And the “walk over” that seems to be intended to tell them what is there, something that previous companies have failed miserably at.

Dowsing perhaps?

But of course fracking presumably would still be required to fracture the shale, if indeed shale is the target, or is there yet another woo woo wheeze to be revealed yet?

And then we have to ask, what is the engineering status of this “developing technology” And how is this process considered in engineering terms and what additional problems and caveats in operational procedure and knock on pollution and contamination effects does it suggest?

presumably such a new technique would require the approval of the OGA and the EA, crippled though they are, before anything can be actually allowed to become operational. Would there be trial runs with on site monitoring? Does the USA who seem to be sold on such practices, know about this process and have they tried and abandoned it all ready? And why?

Then we could perhaps become concerned about a small company of doubtful provenance having the expertise and the financial resilience to operate such a “developing technology” in isolation.

I am sure many of you smell a rat, perhaps there is a clue there, a trial run for other interests.

And of course that does not even begin to approach the entrenched and declared opposition to exploitation in Somerset and Kent and that aspect may well choke this effort before it so much as hires a drill bit before it can be put in the ground.

More questions than answers as usual isn't it.

Maybe the Redmans the grocer at Wigan can enlighten us?

---

Reblogged this on sdbast (<https://sdbast.wordpress.com/2019/02/seeks-land-access-for-somerset-surveys-and-prepares-for-stock-market-listing/>).

REPLY

---

...There are many great contentions between miners concerning a forked twig, for some say that it is of the greatest use in discovering veins, and others deny it. ... All alike grasp the forks of the twig with their hands, clenching their fists, it being necessary that the clenched fingers should be held toward the sky in order that the twig should be raised at that end where the two branches meet. Then they wander hither and thither at random through mountainous regions. It is said that the moment they place their feet on a vein the twig immediately turns and twists, and so by its action discloses the vein ; when they move their feet again and go away from that spot the twig becomes once more immobile...

REPLY

---

Really?

So we need to completely get off fossil fuels within 12 years

REPLY

(actually 11 now it's 2019) otherwise you will see and experience your grandchildren hating you. And yet fracking is still a thing?

HELLO !?

We are being controlled and manipulated by lies and greed at the expense of OUR lands. Time to get those light sabres out. Fight with Love.

Love for nature and love for your descendants.

I really would like to know how this extinction is going to

REPLY

All you ever get from the Greens is "the human race will become extinct" but not how. They give the impression that we will all wake up dead on 1st January 2030 as though that is a given. Could somebody please enlighten us on the sequence of events that will lead to all our deaths please. I do know that if everybody in the UK cut off their gas supply and we stopped burning hydrocarbons in power stations tonight then many, many people would die over the next month.

'I really would like to know how this extinction is going to happen'

REPLY

"For example, coral reefs are projected to decline by 70-90 percent with warming greater than 1.5°C. With an additional half degree of warming, more than 99 percent losses are expected"

<https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/half-degree-and-world-apart-difference-climate-impacts-between-15-c-and-2-c-warming> (<https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/half-degree-and-world-apart-difference-climate-impacts-between-15-c-and-2-c-warming>)

---

Have I missed something?

REPLY

I thought the best scientific evidence available proves beyond doubt the human race is doomed unless we stop extracting and burning fossil fuels pretty much immediately?

What's wrong with these people?

The love of money Peter, the love of money....

REPLY