

Star Energy Albury update

An update from Star Energy's project manager, Sophie Tucker:

Can I say first that we welcome this opportunity to update our neighbours in Albury via the parish's own media. We also much appreciate the constructive dialogue that has been established and is ongoing with Albury Parish Council through our joint working group.

At the time of writing (17th August), we have just started drilling at the Albury Park Wellsite, having overcome some initial technical problems with the power system that drives the drilling rig. It is early days, but if all goes to plan and we only need to drill one appraisal well, we would hope to complete drilling by late-October to November. That should then give us the information we need to begin the detailed appraisal process, which we expect to run into 2010.

As most of you will be aware, this temporary appraisal drilling and testing programme is needed to assess the potential for gas storage in lower strata nearly a mile underground in the Albury gasfield. If the assessment proves that there is potential, we would still need to submit various applications necessary to secure permission for the main storage project.

Site preparation began at the Wellsite back in May and was successfully completed in mid-June, when the drilling rig arrived. We developed a strict traffic management plan to avoid causing nuisance in New Road and it appears to have worked very well. The drilling rig itself arrived without problems. Noise has been closely monitored throughout. All the relevant planning conditions have been successfully met, including one that required us to relocate over 700 newts (of unprotected species). It proved to be quite an operation but they are now happily settled at Chilworth School and Sherborne Pond.

I am delighted that, with the start of work at the Wellsite, the Star Energy Community Fund has been able to assist several local initiatives with grants totalling nearly £37,000. These include Albury Parish Council's village enhancement project, a flower festival at Albury's Old Parish Church and a Relate West Surrey counselling service for teenagers affected by marital breakdown in the immediate area. We have also contributed separately to the costs of the Albury Village Weekend.

I am maintaining close contact with our immediate neighbours. If anyone else has any cause for concern do please ring 01256 381625, which is manned 24-hours-a-day. More general information is available at www.alburygasstorage.info.