

OH Doc No. 22

Recd From: Christine Mc Donnell  
Halligan

Date Recd: 26/4/07

## IPPC Oral Hearing

### Submission from Christine Mc Donnell Halligan

My name is Christine Halligan (nee McDonnell). I live in Castlebar, Co. Mayo with my husband, Declan and my three children.

I was brought up in the small village of Bunowna and my mother, father and sister still live there.

According to Ann Marie Donlon this village doesn't exist as she stated in her Inspectors Report that "The nearest village is Bangor Erris (#10Km)".

Ms Donlon failed to mention the village of Bunowna in this report.

Bunowna is situated circa 1km away from the proposed refinery site. It is a beautiful, peaceful community bordered by forestry and the Glenamoy River.

There are seven homes and approximately twenty-three people living in Bunowna.

Let me describe for you what life is like in Bunowna, on a typical day as a person walks along the quiet cul de sac you can hear the sounds of cattle and sheep, a dog barking in the distance, the sound of children playing, birds singing, the wind rustling through the trees and the sound of the river peacefully flowing over the stones. The air is fresh and invigorating. People get up to go to work or tend their livestock; children go to the local school, all knowing that when they return they can enjoy the beauty and serenity that is Bunowna.

I am concerned that if this proposed determination goes ahead the standard of life for the people of Bunowna, and the surrounding villages and town lands will deteriorate in a way that will have a serious impact on their health, well-being and quality of life.

Firstly I would like to give my opinion on the siting of the proposed refinery. The refinery is to be sited surrounded by a Special Area of Conservation which is The Glenamoy Bog Complex (site code 000500). According to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) the area is special because it is one of the most extensive tracts of blanket bog in the country with machair habitats. The Glenamoy River has a valuable late run of salmon in July with good spawning habitats and water quality; sea trout can also be found here. (source NPWS website)/ the NPWS also state that "considerable archaeological interest" is contained within the bog and that the site is "of outstanding scenic value" (source NPWS website).

In my opinion it is a scandal that Shell are allowed to remove this invaluable bog and transport it to Srahmore – the pollution this entails is a real threat to the water catchment area of Carrowmore lake. This is especially relevant as this is also a Special Area of Conservation according to the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) and local people are restricted in their farming activities e.g. cutting of turf, positioning of silage pits, distribution of fertilizer on the land, etc, in the interests of conserving the environment. Local people have embraced these changes as they can see how the environment they love is benefiting.

Then the Irish government allows Shell to come in and remove the bog causing huge pollution and leaving us to deal with the consequences to our health.

Secondly, I would like to state my opinion on the matter of emissions from the proposed refinery.

In the witness statement of Ian McRae he has said that Shell proposes to flare and cold vent gas on our pristine environment.

Flaring of gas is deemed necessary for safe disposal of natural gas, and the applicant prefers to flare rather than cold vent because they have said that this method of gas so as "to minimise the visual intrusion and disturbance that could arise from the operation of a flare, in what is a rural area".

We know that cold venting was not mentioned in the original EIS and I would like to thank Shell for considering our visual sensibilities in its decision to cold vent but to add that the venting of what Mr McRae says will be 95 tonnes of gas either through flaring or cold venting does upset and anger us.

Mr McRae has also said in the event of an emergency in order to depressurise or purge the pipeline and onshore refinery it will take more than 16 hours of cold venting. Given that a normal monthly vent will take up to 60mins to complete and it will emit 6,500kg's of gas it is totally unacceptable that Shell can justify over 104,000kg of gas being pumped in the clean Erris skies in the event of an emergency. In my opinion the people who live downwind from the refinery in places like Bunowna and all the other villages should not have to face this very real possibility.

In his conclusion Mr McRae has said that:

"Cold venting and flaring of gas from the Bellanaboy Bridge Terminal is at a very low level and will be managed in a manner that maintains this level".

I find this statement unbelievable and it does nothing to allay my fears given Shell's record with the people in this community and worldwide.

Thirdly, the proposed refinery site is a "Seveso" site; this means that large quantities of dangerous substances are stored here – 3,629 tonnes of methanol alone.

It is my belief that such quantities of highly flammable and combustible gas are a very serious fire hazard to the whole community. The surrounding bog and forest lands can easily ignite: indeed we have seen bog fires happen very recent.

If the unthinkable happens and there is an explosion of serious fire at the refinery the evacuation time would be extremely short depending on direction and force of the wind. The local emergency services cannot hope to contain a disaster of this magnitude and the nearest emergency department is far away in Castlebar.

What hope do the people of Erris have then?

The chemicals stored on site: methanol and ethylene glycol are, according to Mr Phil Webb's statement, "encountered in everyday domestic products" such as windscreen washer fluid, oven cleaner, methylated spirits and drain unblockers, etc. this analogy is used by Shell to demonstrate to us how safe these chemicals are as we use them in our daily lives, but we are constantly bombarded by the media and health care professionals saying how dangerous these products are to us, our children and our environment.

These products carry stringent warnings on their packaging to warn us how unsafe and toxic the chemicals really are.

Yet Shell proposes to use these dangerous chemicals in colossal amounts compared with the much lesser amounts in Mr Webb's "everyday domestic products".

How can we trust a company who so easily subjects us to these dangerous chemicals and how can we believe that they will report any so call "insignificant" or "very small" accident/spillages that may occur in the future?

Is this going to be a case where the profits to be gained by Shell far outweigh any damage caused or compensation paid out in the event of any accidents or illnesses developed by local people when the refinery is built? The gas they intend to put through Ballinaboy will have a value of \$3million a day.

Is it going to be more economical for Shell to pay any fines imposed on them by the HSA or the EPA for any breaches that occur during operations rather than spending more money finding a better, cleaner and safer way to refine the gas now? Of course! This is often the way multi nationals operate – balancing the cost of human lives and the environment against financial gain.

This is not acceptable to us.

Finally, I would ask the EPA to demand that Shell further research other methods of processing the Corrib field to enable them to process the gas in a manner which is clean and safe to our pristine environment and safeguards all human lives.

I would like to appeal to the chairman to listen with an open mind to all the evidence that he has heard in this oral hearing and to further research all the information that he has been furnished with before making his report.

I would also appeal to the chairman not to take everything that Shell says as an absolute, especially as the chairman has stated that the EPA does not have experts of their own in the field of oil and gas exploration. The EPA should commission its own independent reports in this area before making their decision.

Also I would like to add that during this oral hearing the chairman has reiterated that the applicant is proposing to build a "refinery" and that it will be regulated as such. However as Shells experts give their evidence they constantly refer to the site as a "terminal". This seems to me to be another attempt to mislead us as to what Shell's real intentions are for the site. I feel that by calling it a terminal Shell hopes to minimise what they are proposing to building the eyes of the general public because a **gas terminal** may sound less threatening to some people than a **gas refinery**.

Agnes Mc Lavery concluded her evidence by saying that;

“Natural gas operations in general do not pose large risks to the environment or to the public”.

Shell can put whatever spin they like on it – large risk, insignificant risk, small risk or very small risk – to us it’s all the same. It is an **unacceptable risk** for us who live here

We are not prepared to risk **any** lives or our environment to anyone especially to a company who states that;

“Existing air quality is a very good and is predicted to remain so with the terminal in operation” (Source Shell E&P objection point 5.2)

In my opinion, evidence to the contrary speaks for itself.

For inspection purposes only.  
Consent of copyright owner required for any other use.