



News Release

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Wildlife Trust calls for planning extension linked to shale gas exploration next to fragile nature reserve to be refused.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has called on Nottinghamshire County Council to refuse a request by IGas Energy for an extension of time for their exploratory shale gas drilling site less than 130 metres from the charity's Misson Carr Nature Reserve.

An exploratory well was drilled by IGas at Misson Springs in north Nottinghamshire in 2018 and shale gas was found, but any potential application for fracking of the site was put on hold following the announcement of the Government's shale gas fracking moratorium in late 2019. The exploratory drilling well was due to be removed and fully restored by November 2020, but the company has now applied for a 3-year extension so that it can delay that restoration, thus keeping open the option to apply for fracking if the moratorium is lifted.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, which has cared for the Misson Carr Nature Reserve, home to fragile and rare wetland habitats and threatened species, since 2001 has objected to the application and is calling on the Council to refuse the extension and to insist that the site be restored as soon as possible. Habitats include rare wet woodlands, marsh and old grazing pastures and the county's largest remaining fragment of a fenland system that once covered much of the local landscape. Species include many unusual plants such as twayblade and the site is also rich in bird species – with all 5 UK species of owl having previously been recorded.

Speaking on behalf of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Head of Nature Recovery (North) Janice Bradley said: "Together with many local residents and campaigners we have opposed the shale gas exploration at Misson Springs since day one. We have real concerns about the potential disturbance to rare breeding birds and the risks of pollution and other impacts on the site's delicate ecosystems and fragile hydrology."

The Trust vigorously opposed the original application but feels that weaknesses in the planning rules and government's strong support for fracking at the time, meant that the County Council had their hands largely tied.

Janice explained: "At the time of the original exploratory drilling submission, applications linked to fracking were being fast tracked through the planning system across the UK. Planning authorities were under undue pressure to make decisions quickly and to start from a presumption in favour of fracking. Now, with a moratorium in place, we feel that this



The Old Ragged School, Brook Street, Nottingham, NG1 1EA
Tel: 0115 958 8242 Email: info@nottswt.co.uk

application should be refused so that the risk of disturbance to wildlife and to this protected nature reserve can finally be drawn to a close. We are in the midst of an ecological and climate crisis, so to even countenance fracking, which would both increase greenhouse gas emissions and potentially damage a site that is nationally important for its wildlife, is wholly unacceptable.”

The Trust is concerned that any extension whilst the moratorium is in place would effectively leave the site at risk indefinitely and is also concerned the level of confidence expressed by IGas that the moratorium will be lifted.

Janice added: “IGas have been extremely bullish about the prospects of the moratorium being lifted which means that they are either being disingenuous or have an inside track on the Government’s thinking.”

IGas has publicly stated that it believes that the shale gas deposits available from the Bowland Shales beneath the area surrounding Misson Springs are of national significance, and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is concerned that any lifting of the moratorium could lead to decades of risky and damaging activity in an extremely sensitive area.

Janice explained: “Misson Carr Nature Reserve is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest – it is of national importance and is supposed to be afforded protection under planning laws, but to date the needs of a private company have been put before concerns about the local environment and the needs of wildlife.

We only have a limited time to halt and reverse the impacts of climate change and to have the threat of future fracking hanging over what was supposed to be a temporary evaluation site for at least another three years is unacceptable. As we face up to the combined climate and ecological crises we cannot go on allowing the exploration of untapped oil and gas reserves. The national and global focus must be on securing alternatives, reversing the impacts of climate change and putting nature into recovery.”

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For further information or to request interviews please contact Erin McDaid on 07734 573862 emcdaid@nottswt.co.uk or Rachel Rutherford on 07519 633236 rrutherford@nottswt.co.uk

Notes for Editors

1) The Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, a registered charity, manages dozens of nature reserves throughout the county. It advises local authorities, community groups and landowners on nature conservation issues, and makes a major input into decision-making on planning matters and other issues.

2) Misson Carr Nature Reserve covers 85 hectares and is home to a variety of habitats, including nationally rare wet woodlands, marsh and old grazing pastures. It also has the county's largest remaining fragment of a fenland system that once covered much of the local

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landscape. It is home to an amazing array of wildlife and boasts many unusual plants such as twayblade. The site is believed to be one of the best in the county for bird species

3) The Trust is part of a nation-wide network of local Trusts which work to protect wildlife in town and country - The Wildlife Trusts. The Wildlife Trusts now boast almost 800,000 members. For more information please see our website: www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org