

# Fife Council

## Briefing note for Elected Members (and other elected representatives/officers, etc. as appropriate)

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<b>From:</b>	<b>E &amp; E Directorate, Protective Services</b>
<b>To:</b>	<b>All Councillors</b>
<b>Cc:</b>	<b>Keith Winter, Executive Director – Enterprise and Environment Robin Presswood, Head of Economy, Planning and Employability Services Other Specified Officers/interested parties – Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay Independent Air Quality Monitoring Review Group &amp; Community Manager (Cowdenbeath)</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay Independent Air Quality Monitoring Review Group 2016 Annual Report and Flaring Incident June 2017</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>19 October 2017</b>
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### **This briefing note is being issued because...**

The Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay Independent Air Quality Monitoring Review Group 2016 Annual Report has been published. This briefing note provides a summary of the report. In addition, an update on the Mossmorran flaring incident of June 2017 is provided.

### **Background**

The Review Group consists of an Independent Chair and includes representatives from Fife Council, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), NHS Fife and the Institute of Occupational Medicine (IOM) as well as Community Councils on the Mossmorran & Braefoot Bay Community & Safety Committee. Representatives of ExxonMobil and Shell also attend the Review Group meetings by invitation.

The Review Group advises Fife Council regarding the monitoring of air emissions arising from the operations at the Mossmorran plants and the Braefoot Bay terminal facilities operated by ExxonMobil and Shell.

Air quality monitoring has demonstrated that concentrations of benzene and other hydrocarbons are low in the vicinity of the facilities. The Review Group concluded in 1999 that its work was nearing completion. It was reconstituted in 2001 following concern expressed by local communities with regard to perceived air quality and cancer-related health issues in the vicinity of Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay.

## Key Points/Update on Progress

### 1. Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay Independent Air Quality Monitoring Review Group 2016 Annual Report

During 2016 there were no plant changes at Shell Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay facilities that would be anticipated to adversely affect local air quality. During 2016 there were no substantive plant changes at ExxonMobil that would adversely affect local air quality. ExxonMobil underwent a permit variation to incorporate Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) legislative updates which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016. There were no breaches of agreed emission limits from regulated sources at the Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay facilities in 2016.

SEPA carries out an annual review of the environmental performance of each site under the Compliance Assessment Scheme. ExxonMobil was rated Excellent for 2016 at both Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay. Shell UK Ltd was also rated Excellent for 2016.

Flaring is undertaken to protect the plant safety during planned and unplanned maintenance work. The ground-level flares are used in preference to the elevated flare to minimise noise and light nuisance for local residents. The quantity flared varies from year to year depending on circumstances.

Continued high availability of the two ground flares and delays in the planned replacement of one of the elevated flare's thermocouples has resulted in the continued increase in volume of gas required for purge and pilot in the flares at the Shell Mossmorran facility. The total quantities of gas flared in 2016 were higher than those in 2015. The increased flaring was primarily due to a planned maintenance activity undertaken in September 2016 at the ExxonMobil Fife Ethylene Plant.

Concentrations of benzene and other hydrocarbons in air monitored along the Fife coastline for BP Production and Exploration were very low. The measured hydrocarbons are emitted from a variety of sources around the Forth including BP's operations at Hound Point, the operations of ExxonMobil and Shell at Braefoot Bay and Mossmorran, and road transport. It should be appreciated that measured concentrations at any one location are highly dependent on weather conditions. There has been an overall reduction in the levels of hydrocarbons, including benzene, present in air over the last decade.

From 2016 monitoring data, Fife Council's Air Quality team did not identify any new issues in the vicinity of Mossmorran or Braefoot Bay in their 2017 Air Quality Annual Progress Report. This report is to be submitted to the Environment, Protective Services & Community Safety Council Committee for approval on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Following this it will be published on the Fife Council website at [www.fifedirect.org.uk/airquality](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/airquality).

The Review Group has continued to review the possible impact of the wind farm at Little Raith Farm (immediately north of the Mossmorran site boundary) on pollutant dispersion from Mossmorran, but is not aware of any significant new information that would assist in the prediction of possible impacts. There have been no additional turbine applications within the 3km buffer for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 to date. Planning approval was granted for one additional wind turbine (application considered in 2015 report) although this is external to the buffer area.

The outcomes of air quality monitoring in the vicinity of the Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay facilities, as reported in the Independent Air Quality Monitoring Review Group 2016 Annual

Report, indicate that automatic continuous monitoring of pollutants in surrounding local community areas is not required.

In conclusion, the work undertaken by the Review Group in 2016 demonstrates that emissions from the Shell and ExxonMobil Plants at Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay continue to pose no significant risk to the health of members of the local community.

## **2. Flaring Incident June 2017**

An extended period of flaring from the Mossmorran plant occurred in June 2017 commencing on the 12<sup>th</sup> June (“pump failure”) and a second separate incident from a “process upset” resulted in black smoke being generated for a period of approximately 27 minutes on the evening of 18<sup>th</sup> June. Flaring ceased on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017.

SEPA received a considerable number of complaints from the community following the period of prolonged flaring. As the regulator of the Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay facilities, SEPA is undertaking a full investigation into the causes of the flaring and what action the operators intend to undertake to prevent recurrence of any similar events. SEPA will keep representatives of the local community updated as appropriate on the investigation process.

Fife Council took part in a Problem Assessment Group Meeting, held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017, with NHS Fife and SEPA. It was agreed to set up a meeting of The Review Group to consider the recent flaring incident (meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

Fife Council and SEPA also attended the recent Mossmorran Action Group meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017 where the concerns of local communities were noted and discussed with regard to informing future actions on these issues.

## **Action Required/Next Steps**

At The Review Group meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017, SEPA confirmed that they will update local communities, as appropriate, on progress in terms of their formal investigations into the flaring incident from June 2017.

The Review Group is to assess options for improving communications with local communities in order to address any concerns relating to local air quality issues. This will include in the future summarising the detailed technical content of The Review Group’s reports into a non-technical concise format for members of the public. Community representatives will also be invited to provide their views on how The Review Group could engage with local communities in the future.

The Review Group is to liaise with the Mossmorran Community and Safety Committee to determine how other environmental issues (such as noise, vibration and light pollution) may be examined further. The terms of reference of the Mossmorran Community and Safety Committee includes providing a forum which will enable local communities to be briefed on the environmental impacts of Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay facilities and in terms of its remit includes “To identify and discuss potential safety and/or environmental impacts of the developments at Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay on the area. Where appropriate, to identify and suggest potential action or investigation to be taken in connection with such impacts” and also “To receive for information and discussion purposes, reports on various aspects relating to measures and procedures designed to safeguard the environment and monitor potential environmental impact of the developments”.

## **Supporting Material (if any):**

The full Mossomorrnan and Braefoot Bay Independent Air Quality Monitoring Review Group 2016 Annual Report, and general information about the Review Group, is available online at [www.fifedirect.org.uk/mossmorrnan-braefoot](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/mossmorrnan-braefoot).

General information about air quality in Fife can be found online at [www.fifedirect.org.uk/airquality](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/airquality).

## **Responsible Officer(s)/Contact Details for further information (if different/additional to the author of the briefing):**

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