

Name of Exercise: Operation of the Shell U.K. Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) Plant and Marine Terminal

Location: Fife, Scotland

Participation Exercise under which Article? *Article 6, Capacity Building*

Purpose of Participation Exercise:

To improve relationships between Shell UK and the local community through a series of measures aimed at achieving transparency and openness on safety, environmental and community involvement matters.

Background:

The Fife NGL plant was constructed in the early 1980's to process natural gas liquids piped from the North Sea gas fields. The processed gas is then exported through a marine terminal on the Firth of Forth about 5 miles from the processing site. When Shell applied for permission for the plant from the local authority in the 1980's, the local community was concerned about:

- safety issues generally, but particularly around the marine terminal between the communities of Aberdour and Dalgety Bay; and,
- pollution from the processing plant, particularly from the flaring of gas that might affect the neighbouring communities of Cowdenbeath, Lochgelly, Crossgates and Auchtertool.

During the planning application phase, the construction of the plant and its initial operating period (approximately from 1983 to 1993) relationships between the plant operator and the local communities varied from poor to reasonable. In addition to not wanting the plant and terminal to be located in the area, the local communities felt that the plant management was not open enough.

In 1993, the management at the plant set out to improve relationships between Shell UK and the local community through a series of measures aimed at achieving transparency and openness on safety, environmental and community involvement matters.

Participation Techniques Used:

One of the planning conditions included in the planning approval was the establishment of a Community & Safety Liaison Committee. This was chaired by a member of Fife Council and includes representatives from the local community councils. Shell U.K. who operate the plant and Exxon Chemical (a neighbouring operation), report to the committee who are advised by officials from local public bodies responsible for planning and environmental matters. The committee receives reports on the operations at the plants, financial contributions to the local community, any lost time incidents and employment levels.

Other measures aimed at achieving transparency on safety, environmental and community involvement matters include:

- an Environmental Management and Audit System (EMAS) (an independent and audited environmental performance accreditation system);
- an Open Day (guided tours of the plant and information on the source of the raw materials and the products from the plant);
- an annual charity fund raising day (staff from the plant work with local volunteers to organise an event aimed at helping local people – it was very important to increase the involvement of staff in the local community);
- 'Understanding Industry' activities (Shell works in local schools where plant staff and others discuss with pupils what it is like to work in industry).

Who participated?

The object is to secure improved dialogue with local people through a series of increasingly inclusive groups:

- Community & Safety Liaison Committee.
- Primary and secondary schools in the area.
- The local business community.
- The wider community in the neighbouring town and villages.

Stage(s) at which public participated in the process:

The objective is to create an ongoing dialogue that will improve mutual understanding and create the conditions to allow the concerns of the community to be identified and responded to quickly.

What information was made available?

As part of the EMAS process there is a six monthly publication of the Plant's environmental performance to allow comparisons to be made and questions raised by the local community and other key participants. This can be through direct contact with the plant's management or the established Community & Safety Liaison Committee. The Liaison Committee process allows for further information to be made available, both routinely and on request, on a more regular basis and for specific questions to be asked of senior plant staff.

What was the outcome of the public participation exercise?

From the perspective of the plant management, the main benefit has been a greatly improved understanding of the concerns of the local community and the reasons for these concerns. This has enabled specific measures to be put in place. For example, the amount of gas flared has been significantly reduced over the last 5 years. Action has also been taken to manage the agricultural land around the site to achieve improved bio-diversity, partly as a response to local opinions.

The participation exercise has also highlighted the need to open the plant to the public so that they can better understand the processes and the products. This led to the holding of the first open day in the plant's 16 year history when more than 1,300 people visited the site. The improved understanding and continuing vigilance of the local communities has in turn helped to improve the environmental performance of the plant.

The investment of £5m (USD 8 million) in a Vapour Recovery Unit at the marine terminal is an example of the action that the company has taken voluntarily as a consequence of the heightened awareness of the communities' environmental concerns. This ensures that gas vapours do not enter the atmosphere around the terminal.

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