

11 July 2012

Media statement

GISBORNE DISTRICT COUNCIL DECISION TO GRANT TAG OIL/APACHE CORPORATION OIL CONSENTS FLAWED

Gisborne District Council has granted resource consents to TAG Oil and Apache Corporation for site establishment works for a drilling platform on a property in Te Karaka. The application was not publicly notified and the Council decided not to defer the decision until it received related applications for the exploratory drilling which are expected.

“The consented activities are clearly stage one of a petroleum exploration activity. The site will be of no value to the applicants if they do not gain consent for drilling activities,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“The RMA allows Councils to defer considering a consent application until all consents required for the proposal are received. It is best practice for all required consents for an activity to be identified from the outset, applied for contemporaneously and considered together. This ensures that all environmental effects can be taken into account in deciding whether consents should be granted.

“If the applicants are allowed to apply for resource consents incrementally this can mean that later consents are granted based on the baseline created by the earlier consent. This is a piecemeal approach.

“By splitting things up like this, the applicants are effectively gaming the system to make it easier for them to get consent for exploration drilling.

“We are concerned that this practice seems to be spreading with oil exploration companies adopting the same approach elsewhere in the country.

“We also note that the Gisborne District Council has decided to grant the resource consents on a non-notified basis, excluding even immediate neighbours from having a say. This ignores the clear evidence of visual, traffic and noise effects.

“If the decision on notification had been deferred until all the consent applications had been received it is likely the Council would have decided to notify.

“EDS is extremely concerned about the approach taken by both the applicant and the Gisborne District Council and we are looking at potential legal action.

“We are not opposed to oil exploration but we really want to see these large international companies like TAG Oil playing fair and doing things properly,” Mr Taylor concluded.