A number of gas drainage wells are associated with Xstrata’s Bulga/Beltana mine. These are not coal seam gas production wells, but rather are a necessary safety measure for the mine to avoid a dangerous underground build up of methane gas. This is a common feature of underground coal mines, and a requirement to maintain the safety of underground mine workers.

However, rather than simply venting the greenhouse-intensive methane to the atmosphere, in 2009 the mine lodged a modification application to make productive use of the gas via a number of small gas-fired power generators to be located on the mine site.

As part of its assessment, the Department referred the application to Singleton Shire Council and a submission was received from a community group. The application was approved in July 2010 resulting in a positive environmental outcome. See [http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=3105](http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=3105)

As a result of the approval, a number of gas-fired generators are currently under construction at the mine site. Electricity to be produced by the generators will be used to power some of the mine’s site infrastructure and the mine has indicated that any surplus electricity produced will be fed back into the national power grid.