



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

22nd May 2018

Dear Greg,

SHALE GAS PLANNING

Further to the recent Written Ministerial Statement on shale, many of my constituents have contacted me with concerns that proposals to treat non-fracking drilling as permitted development and major applications the responsibility of the National Planning Regime will weaken these protections.

As you know, around two-thirds of my constituency is covered by shale gas exploration licences and an application to hydraulically fracture a gas well at Kirby Misperton, near Malton, was approved by North Yorkshire County Council on 23rd May 2016. I am supportive of exploration but this is without doubt the most significant and controversial local political issue, and will be so for many other colleagues as development progresses in other constituencies.

I have endeavoured to get a thorough understanding of the issues with this potential new industry, funding my own trip to Pennsylvania and establishing an All Party Parliamentary Group for Shale Gas Regulation and Planning.

Speaking to colleagues and ministers, there is a widely held view that once a few wells had been successfully established, public apprehension will diminish. I do not subscribe to this view. Of the two main public concerns, water/air pollution and industrialisation of the landscape, the latter is the one that worries local people most. They are often presented with pictures or YouTube clips of scarred fracked landscapes in other countries and we have very little to counter these images as there are no national guidelines for well-pad density or proximity to towns and villages. Unless local residents can be sure that there will be clear limits on the proliferation of well-pads, concerns will grow over time, as has been the case in Australia and the US.

Shale gas exploration on the scale proposed is unlike any other development activity we have ever seen in the UK. The evidence we have taken from producers indicates that a workable maximum well-pad density would be eight to ten well-pads per 100 square km (meaning that there could still be a well-pad every three miles) but there is no formal policy in place to make



sure that this will be the case. Thus far, the only method of restricting overdevelopment is the local authority planning requirement to assess and restrict cumulative impact and I have received written assurances from the Prime Minister and Energy Ministers that these considerations will take priority over the PEDL holder requirement to maximise recovery. I have worked closely with North Yorkshire County Council to develop their Draft Minerals and Waste Plan, which offers significant protection to our precious landscapes and existing local economies.

To secure public confidence in the process, ease local and national concerns on shale gas, and to relieve pressure on members and councillors of all political persuasions who are inclined to support exploration, I strongly recommend:

- The development and adoption of national planning policies as follows:
 - Based upon the hydrocarbons policies within the North Yorkshire Minerals and Waste plan
 - Prohibiting surface drilling and well-pads in Protected Areas (National Parks, AONB and SSSIs) and in buffer-zones around these areas
 - A maximum density of ten well-pads per 100 sq. km. outside Protected Areas
 - Minimum separation distance of 500m from a dwelling
 - Requirement for pads to be located to allow direct access from, or be situated within 0.5 mile of, an A-road or good B-road
 - Clear rules to confirm that cumulative impact will always override licence-holder requirements to maximise recovery
 - Development of new well-pads and associated infrastructure such as pipelines not to be treated as permitted development

I hope these ideas are helpful and would very much like to meet you to discuss how we can acquire and maintain the required social licence for shale gas exploration in the UK.

Yours ever,

Kevin Hollinrake MP

I have written a similar letter to the PM and included a request for a meeting. Claire has been excellent and very helpful.