



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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22nd October 2018

Shale Gas - Consultation on Permitted Development and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project status

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 May 23rd 2016 and is currently awaiting final approval. 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, 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 8 to 10 well-pads per 100 square km (meaning that there could still be a well-pad every 2 to 3 miles) but there is no formal policy in place to make sure 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. Many of my constituents have contacted me with concerns that the proposals



to treat non-fracking drilling as permitted development and major applications the responsibility of the National Planning Regime will weaken these protections.

I have tried to address these concerns by means of a number of meetings and correspondences with the Energy Minister, The Rt Hon Claire Perry MP and Planning Minister, Kit Malthouse MP and through my service as a member of the Select Committee for Housing, Communities and Local Government. You will be familiar with the report we published on this issue <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/767/767.pdf> and I fully concur with its findings and recommendations, most particularly:

Despite our recommendation above and the overwhelming evidence we received, if NSIP were to be used for fracking applications, it is essential that a National Policy Statement is prepared as a matter of urgency that would include suitable measures to restrict inappropriate proliferation of well-pads and unacceptable impacts on landscapes. We consider that the North Yorkshire Draft Joint Minerals and Waste Plan offers an appropriate template for such guidance. While we note that the Government stated that the issue of cumulative impact "would be addressed on a case by case basis as part of the NSIP examination process," the National Policy Statement should ensure that it is considered automatically as part of every determination. Every decision should also be consistent with Local Plans. (Paragraph 84)

Shale gas development of any type should not be classed as a permitted development. Given the contentious nature of fracking, local communities should be able to have a say in whether this type of development takes place, particularly as concerns about the construction, locations and cumulative impact of drill pads are yet to be assuaged by the Government. (Paragraph 91)

I hope you will address these concerns in your response to this consultation.

Kind regards

Kevin Hollinrake MP

Cc

The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP

The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP