I am a retired GP living in a small rural village in North Yorkshire. Many friends and neighbours are involved in farming and tourism [some in both], the main industries in rural North Yorkshire.

I feel compelled to respond to this inquiry, as there is an elephant in the room: a far greater risk to rural tourism than any of the references or questions alluded to on your website, the negative effects of which threatens to dwarf any other positive measures you may take as a result of this inquiry.

I refer of course to the risk of Fracking, an industrial process, which Defra itself described [in its draft shale Gas Rural Economy Impacts Paper last year] in the following words:

- “Shale gas may transform a previously pristine and quiet natural region, bringing increased industrialisation. As a result, rural economy businesses that rely on clean air, land, water and/or a tranquil environment may suffer losses from this change, such as agriculture, tourism, organic farming, hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation.”
- "may reduce the number of visitors and tourists to the rural area, with an associated reduction in spend in the local tourism economy."

Tourism in North Yorkshire brings in billions of pounds each year, and this will be at risk if Fracking is allow to take over the area. People will simply not wish to visit an area of the country covered with Fracking rigs, with the associated noise and light pollution, high levels of HGV traffic on small country lanes, and the real or perceived health risks of the area.

INEOS say they wish to dig up to 396 wells on 30 well pads on each 10 Km x 10 Km exploratory licence area. Each area is 38 square miles, so they intend to build almost one well pad per square mile, each digging 13 wells!!

Unfortunately those safely in government in London seem to be inclined to listen to those in the energy industry [who gain to make much profit from the industry] that the process is safe. Well, they would say that, wouldn’t they?
The objectors are often portrayed as scaremongers, nimbys and ecowarriors. Nothing could be further from the truth. The objectors are simply the residents of the threatened areas, whose whole way and quality of life is in jeopardy. They are parents and grandparents who are concerned for the health and well-being of their children and grandchildren.
The fact is that an industrial process that may cause limited damage when carried out in isolated areas of a huge country like the USA are simply not suitable for a small densely populated country like ours.
You ask what role Defra should take in promoting tourism. I urge Defra to take a stand within government to prevent the industrialization of our lovely countryside, which will most assuredly decimate the tourism industry, the focus of this inquiry.

I respectfully ask EFRA Commons Select Committee to do the same.

August 2016