I am responding to this enquiry because I live in the Forest of Dean, which is in an area that is currently threatened by fracking and I’m very concerned about the damaging effect that fracking would have on tourism – and therefore the economy - in this district.

1. People come to the Forest of Dean because it is very rural, peaceful and free from pollution. Fracking would industrialise the countryside around here and people would no longer come. Tourism is very important to the Forest of Dean. The loss of tourism that fracking would cause would have a terrible effect on the area. The small number of short-term jobs supplied by fracking would have no impact on the large number of jobs that would be lost in the tourism sector if fracking were to take place. The loss of jobs in tourism would have a knock-on effect on other sectors as less money would circulate in the local economy.

2. The roads in and around the Forest are poor and already congested with traffic (because so many of the population have to commute outside the area for work). Road accidents are common, especially on the A48. Fracking traffic would damage and overburden the roads and make them even more dangerous than they are at present.

3. Defra’s draft Shale Gas Rural Economy Impacts Paper, which was eventually published unredacted in July 2015, states: “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.”

4. This paper also went on to say that fracking "may reduce the number of visitors and tourists to the rural area, with an associated reduction in spend in the local tourism economy."

Conclusion
I believe that fracking would be very damaging to tourism in the Forest of Dean. I feel that Defra has a duty to oppose such developments within government, and should instead be working to promote sustainable, low-impact tourism in order to preserve the English countryside.

I believe that the EFRA Select Committee should commission a new independent report of the impact of the shale gas industry on the rural economy, including rural tourism. In the meantime the EFRA Select Committee should demand an immediate moratorium on fracking and other forms of unconventional gas production.

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