Written evidence submitted by Susan Allen (RUT0082)

The evidence for the adverse effects of fracking on climate change is irrefutable of course, but I want to give you a more personal perspective. My comments are based on 14 years of living in Ryedale but could apply to any rural area of the country. I don’t think that even the fracking companies would dare to frack under towns and cities, at least not yet!

I have no doubt that fracking would mean the destruction of our beautiful countryside in Ryedale, and the loss of animals and plants, many of which are both rare and protected, but nevertheless thrive in this pristine environment. People who live in Ryedale know how special it is, how easy it is to find a stunning walk and enjoy the solitude and peace of the area.

The tourist industry, which would be badly hit if fracking were to take hold, would become a thing of the past. Who’d want to come here, passing through an industrial landscape in order to find a remembered beauty spot, assuming of course that it still existed. But tourism isn’t just valuable for the local economy – it’s a vital escape route for people who don’t have the natural world on their doorstep.

Children in particular benefit hugely from experiencing the freedom and adventure of the countryside. There have been many reports of the beneficial effects of learning in ‘the great outdoors’. Industrialisation caused by fracking would deprive children of this opportunity. We continually look back to a childhood of warm summers and the freedom to explore, at the same time regretting that for many, this no longer seems to be the case. It certainly will not be possible if we allow the industrialisation of the countryside. People come to Ryedale from all over the country, especially from West Yorkshire and the North East. The value of such an area goes beyond economics and once lost, it could never be regained.

The state of Victoria in Australia has just banned fracking and coal-bed methane extraction because of the potential devastating effect of this on the state’s agriculture. A director of INEOS has said that they plan to frack on an industrial scale. For mere short-term financial gain for a very few, countless generations will lose a stunningly beautiful, life-enhancing part of the world. This cannot be allowed to happen.

I urge you to recommend that the EFRA Select Committee commission a new independent report on the impact of the shale gas industry on the rural economy, and until this is produced, I urge you to demand an immediate moratorium on fracking and other forms of unconventional gas production.

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