I live in Bristol and choose to spend most holidays in the UK. This year I took my family to North Yorkshire because of the attraction of the peaceful, beautiful countryside. I am greatly concerned to hear that fracking is planned for this area. We should be investing in renewable energy for sustainable energy production which reduces our carbon emissions and therefore our adverse impact on climate change. We should not be digging up more fossil fuels via a process that is banned in some states/ countries because of the vast amount of evidence about long lasting and actual damage and risks of harm to human and livestock health and to the wildlife and environment.

I would certainly not be taking my family to holiday in an area where fracking is present – this would not provide the benefits of a peaceful countryside holiday with the noise and air pollution of frack pads or rural roads clogged up with heavy goods vehicles and of course I would not be allowing children to play in streams where risks to water pollution are present. There are many others who will share my views and who will be more likely to spend their money taking a holiday elsewhere (abroad), at a time when our rural economies really need the financial input that tourism provides.

I am very concerned about the industrialisation of our countryside. I grew up in rural Somerset where I now own land which would be irreversibly damaged if fracking were to take place. Fracking and the industrialisation of the countryside for shale gas production are incompatible with DEFRA’s aim of developing sustainable rural tourism. The two will not go hand in hand.

Many people choose to live in the countryside, again because of the peaceful nature of this lifestyle. This will not be the case if these peaceful areas are destroyed, alongside the businesses that people in rural areas own such as campsites and B&B. Many farmers now only survive financially because of diversification into tourism related businesses. These would be threatened if fracking were to take place. Our roads are already congested and an increase in this through the constant movement of HGVs through rural roads would certainly put people off spending time in the area.

An area of growth in the UK has been in the food and restaurant business with an emphasis on locally grown, often organic food. People might think twice about visiting a local farmers market if they are concerned about toxic carcinogenic frack fluid leaking out into the water supply of the local farm where the food is produced.

There are many areas in the UK that are SSSIs or AONBs and currently legislation affords them no protection against fracking. I am concerned about the impact on the wildlife (e.g. light pollution on bats) if fracking were to take place and if wildlife is affected then so too will tourism.
I understand that DEFRA’s own report (published unredacted in July 2015), says that fracking would negatively impact the rural tourism industry: “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.” It is unclear what happened with this report and why the conclusions were not followed or a follow up report commissioned. This gives me concern that government is in the hands of big business (i.e. the fracking industry) rather than acting on what is right for the general public.

The evidence shows that widespread fracking will have a very damaging effect on tourism, wildlife and the wellbeing of people living in rural areas, and I believe that the shale gas industry is one of the greatest threats facing rural tourism in England.

I feel that EFRA 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 am requesting the EFRA Select Committee commission a new independent report of the impact of the unconventional gas industry on the rural economy, including rural tourism. Until such a report is produced, the EFRA Select Committee should demand an immediate moratorium on fracking and other forms of unconventional gas production.

August 2016