I am responding to this enquiry because I am very concerned about the damaging effect that fracking would have on rural tourism in England, and also in the rest of the UK. I live in Great Habton, which is in an area that is 1 mile away from Kirby Misperton which is threatened by fracking and I am very concerned about the impact fracking in our area would have on our rural tourist economy. An economy that supports our region.

**Fracking will result in the irreversible industrialisation of our countryside.**

The land is our most precious commodity in the UK. Concreting thousands of hectares of pristine land will rob the UK of some of its most valuable asset. Fracking is a heavy industrialised process unsuitable for the English countryside with thousands of wells necessary to produce a meaningful amount of gas. Widespread industrialisation of the countryside for shale gas production is completely at odds with EFRA’s aim of developing sustainable rural tourism.

**Fracking will have a negative impact on homes and businesses near well-sites.**

Fracking will be allowed within 400m of homes, businesses and rural villages, Drilling and fracking are 24/7 activities, creating create noise, light and air pollution. The additional huge increase in HGV truck movements will make our area less attractive for tourists. Would you visit or spend your holidays in the shadow of a fracking well-site and or will avoid fracking ‘blackspots’. It goes without saying that businesses close to a well-site, such as campsites, B&Bs, pubs, hotels, etc. will suffer a fall in visitor numbers.

**Fracking will also reduce property prices, which will discourage rural investment.**

Fracking will have a negative effect on house, land and property prices in fracking areas, particularly for properties within one mile of a well-site. Local mortgage providers now run a fracking search in the lending criteria. The DEFRA Shale Gas Rural Economy Report stated: "A study in Texas concluded that house prices valued at more than $250,000 and within 1,000 ft of a well-site saw their values decrease by 3-14%." And the same report went on to say: "House prices in close proximity to the drilling operations are likely to fall. There could be a 7% reduction in property values within one mile of an extraction site."
A report in Mortgage Introducer magazine stated that properties near the only well that has ever been fracked, Preese Hall in Manchester, fell by 4%. This drop in property values in turn will have a negative effect on rural business investment, as people will be reluctant to invest in new and existing rural businesses in areas where fracking is taking place.

**Fracking will result in a huge increase in heavy traffic on country roads.**

Each fracking well-pad will have between 10 and 40 wells, meaning tens of thousands of HGV trucks per well-pad on mainly rural networks, it has already been shown that there is likely to be a 30% increase in air pollution.
There will be more queues, traffic accidents and damage to roads and verges and travelling around rural areas will be far more difficult for tourists which will turn them away. The increased traffic on these already clogged networks will impact on rural businesses such as farms, shops and small factories, all of which rely on deliveries for their businesses to function effectively. Let’s not forget the peace and quiet of the countryside and rural villages will be destroyed.

The health impacts of fracking will deter tourists from visiting fracking areas.

Fracking is banned or restricted by moratoria in many other countries, such as France, Germany, Bulgaria, Holland and Scotland, and in US states such as Maryland and New York State. It has now been banned in Victoria Australia to protect its rural economy.


These bans and moratoria are also because the health impacts of fracking on public health are considered to be too dangerous. Dr. Howard A. Zucker, NY State Health Commissioner, who recommended a fracking ban in his home state after a six-year study, said, “Would I let my family live in a community with fracking? The answer is no. The potential risks of fracking are too great. In fact, they are not even fully known.” New studies from John Hopkins University show that people living near fracking wells are four times more likely to have asthma attacks and premature births. John Hopkins most recent study finds living near a fracking site causes migraines.

http://hub.jhu.edu/2016/08/25/fracking-health-migraine-sinus-fatigue/

Would you visit an area if fracking were allowed? Many people would be discouraged from visiting because of health concerns for themselves and their families.

Fracking will reduce employment in the rural tourism sector.

Tourism provides millions of permanent jobs for the rural economy (over 3.1 million in 2013, according to Visit Britain). Yes fracking would provide a small number of short-term jobs at each well-site, but these are temporary and transient. Most jobs on fracking well-sites would go to specialists brought in on fixed contracts, not local people. Even industry estimates of up to 64,000 jobs in 2024 from 4,000 fracking wells are dwarfed by the numbers of jobs in tourism threatened by fracking. The fracking industry is a boom and bust economy and does not create long-term jobs. It poses a risk to the long term image and perception of a tourist area which will take years to recover from. Widespread fracking would threaten thousands of permanent jobs in the tourist industry, as visitor numbers would fall and businesses would close.

Fracking will affect the reputation of food produced in affected areas.

Rural economies depend on farming and food production as well as tourism. Malton is a Local enterprise Partnership priority for food production. The reputation and image of the region puts at risk the millions already invested in North Yorkshire. Many areas of the country are known for their high-quality produce and rely on this reputation to attract tourists to local food fairs, farmers’ markets, restaurants, etc.

People would automatically think that food from farms grown near fracking wells could be contaminated. This will result in lower sales, falling tourist numbers, and lower rural employment.

Nature and wildlife sites are under threat from fracking.
Our nation’s most protected assets, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), World Heritage and Ramsar sites, etc. are hugely important for rural tourism and attract millions of visitors every year. There is currently no primary legislation banning fracking within these protected areas. Currently fracking in these areas is only restricted by planning conditions and government policy statements, not legislation.

However, current legislation does allow fracking well-pads to be situated just outside the borders of these protected areas and wells can then be drilled horizontally underneath the protected areas. National Parks, AONBs and SSSIs may therefore end up being ringed by fracking well-sites. The noise, pollution and traffic would destroy the delicate balance of the country’s most precious and wildlife-rich places.

Large numbers of people visit the English countryside to enjoy the wildlife that lives there. Widespread fracking will have a serious effect on wildlife populations, particularly if fracking sites are situated around the edges of protected areas. Noise, air and light pollution and increased traffic from fracking well-sites will reduce the population of wild birds and animals, most of whom will leave the area completely. Drilling and fracking at night would also have a detrimental effect on protected nocturnal species such as owls and bats. All these factors will have a dramatic effect on the number of visitors to these rural areas.

Public perception of fracking.

Fracking is extremely unpopular with the general public, with only 21% of the population supporting the process, according to the latest Government Wave 18 survey. The government’s proposals to pay up to £10,000 to residents living near well have failed to convince the public, with only 33% supporting the policy. Most people don’t like fracking, and are unlikely to want to go on holiday to an area where this industry is established.

If a particular part of the countryside is known to be a fracking zone, this will discourage people from visiting this area, reducing tourist numbers.

Defra’s own report says that fracking would negatively impact the rural tourist sector.

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

The first time this report was published it was redacted 63 times, including sections on house prices, economic impacts, social services, local services and the executive summary. The un-redacted report was finally published in July 2015, only because the government was made to do so by the Information Commissioner after a long-running public outcry.

When it was finally published, Defra distanced itself from the report’s conclusions, claiming that it was an early draft of an internal document, was not analytically robust, and that work on this report had been discontinued.
You have to wonder why the report was discontinued, instead of being re-drafted so that it was considered by Defra to be ‘analytically robust’ and suitable for publication. Was the effect of fracking on the rural economy not worthy of further examination?

Defra has therefore never completed a comprehensive report on the effect of fracking on the rural economy – which of course would include the rural tourism sector, the subject of this enquiry. Is this perhaps because Defra knows that the results of such a report would be overwhelmingly negative?

**Conclusion**

There are many inherent risks of Fracking including contamination of water bore holes, pollution from heavily increased HGV traffic and just what do we do with the toxic ‘frack’ waste? Our land is precious and blighting large areas of the countryside with well sites, processing plants and pipelines is a step to far. Fracking will divide our community for a long time after the fracking companies have gone.

Millions of pounds have been invested in promoting the region as the food hub of the North and make Yorkshire and the number one destination in Europe.

I believe the UK needs meet its climate targets and embrace new technologies to drive a new sustainable economy.

It is clear that widespread fracking will have a very damaging effect on tourism 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 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 recommend 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. 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*