The vibrancy of the rural economy is driven as much by the distinctive quality of life, sustainable supportive and cohesive rural community and rural way of life as it is to a flourishing, innovative business community. This distinctiveness adds to its attraction both as a tourist destination and as a place to work, invest and live.

Business owners are rooted within the communities in which they work and invested as much in the land and landscape as they are in the health and wellbeing of their neighbours and neighbouring businesses. Intrinsically connected as they are farming, fishing, shooting, brings in walkers, sportspeople etc. who stay and spend in the area supporting businesses across the community. Visitors return to set up businesses. Market towns flourish, connecting the community.

Innovation and diversification that complement the economy and work within it abound, attracting more businesses bringing sustainable jobs, growth and market leading brands that are exported and recognised worldwide. Ambition for and pride in the area adds to the distinctive offering, supporting reputation and brand and through them growth much wider than the immediate community.

The distinctive brand of the region is key and must be managed, maintained and marketed. Natural assets key to that distinctive quality of life and the tourism industry must be protected if tourism and the rural economy are to grow.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/18/yorkshire-europes-leading-destination_n_5649016.html

In Yorkshire that rural brand is one of rolling green hills, awe inspiring views, pristine and beautiful landscapes, fresh clean air, crystal clear waterways, stunning and flourishing wildlife, hidden valleys opening up to uninterrupted views that go on for miles, historic houses, majestic ruins, protected landscapes, areas of outstanding natural beauty, sites of special scientific interest - quiet tranquil and welcoming, a place where anyone can get in touch with our past and build for our future, with room to breathe and get really active.

And Yorkshire is really successful – Tourism grew from £5.9bn to £7bn last year alone – an 18.6% increase. The overall economy is almost 7% of UK’s total economic output, and growing, with the marriage between vibrant innovative attractive cities, wonderful existing and new attractions like the Yorkshire Wildlife Park, Flamingo Land, The Deep, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the pristine rural landscapes, tranquil activities and adrenaline inducing sporting facilities being key.

To maintain and protect that distinctive quality of life and help grow the economy further I believe we need to:

1. **Funding and fiscal policies:**
   a. Support investment in local business infrastructures that generate sustainable wealth and jobs within the community.
      - Grants/funding application and information
• essential business infrastructure e.g. **broadband** – as a local resident and farmer I have no fixed line broadband and a very unreliable, virtually unusable mobile connection. Access to the internet is now a business requirement.

• initiatives which give small/start-up businesses access to support and expert advice such as rural mentoring programmes, marketing advice etc. Local communities already provide support, sharing machinery/resources, giving their time and energy and buying local to support new businesses, but for some things a more coordinated approach is required.

• Tax breaks for start-up businesses not large corporations that do not vest that wealth sustainably into local communities.

b. Government subsidy and investment in line with regional brand and plans e.g. in large events that showcase the region such as the Tour de France or in line with LEP and Local plans supporting green energy businesses before other Countries take over.

2. **Planning and regulation:**

a. Only encourage investment in **sustainable** land use in line with regional brand, business and supportive of the tourism offering – land is the **finite** asset on our island.

b. Allow the **communities affected** to make final decisions on planning applications and how they fit and support the growth of the sustainable economy they have worked hard to deliver - that they understand, are connected to and invested in. Do not change legislation to enforce decisions on local communities.

Every local economy I have lived in wants to embrace growth and business that sustainably supports, enhances, adds to and improves local offerings, opportunities and economic growth.

c. **Management of the local and natural environment** in a way that supports and protects sustainable tourism. Have a hurdle that only allows developments that enhance rather than detract from that offering and invests long term wealth in local communities through opportunities for business ownership, sustainable local jobs, using the skills of the local community and spreading opportunity into existing businesses.

Renewable Energy Industry is a great example with many small and diversified businesses at the frontline of this innovative, green industry which is so critical for our future.

d. Allow local Communities and District Councils to apply moratoria that **cannot be overruled** by County Councils or Government who do not understand the drivers of the local economy, community cohesion and growth.

e. Ensure all planning applications are viewed in terms of cumulative future impact and not individually in isolation – including climate, road usage, impact on character etc.
3. **Access: What, if any, changes are needed to give people better access?**
   a. Invest in sympathetic road and rail infrastructure and maintenance to support tourist and business access

   b. Encourage traffic orders that maintain and allow easy access to safe well flowing roads for tourism and local sustainable business

   c. Ensure any planning applications are viewed in cumulative terms and have sections on road safety and impact on Tourism and local sustainable business access, including outdoor pursuits e.g. cycling.

4. **How can national and local policies get the right balance between growing tourism and enhancing the local environment and character? And measures needed to ensure transport, housing and other infrastructure meets visitor needs?**

   Do not change policy and local rights to allow mass, intensive, invasive, destructive, polluting, unsustainable industrialisation – particularly Shale Gas Extraction ‘Fracking’. Short term unsustainable change to land usage damages brand, reputation, visual amenity/landscape and quality of life, negatively impacting the pristine, attractive, successful and growing rural environment and economy which underpins the attraction of the Region as a place to visit and do business.

   This would be particularly true for visitors or potential businesses that come from regions and Countries with bans, moratoria or where fracking has created controversy. Generally where fracking takes place there is huge opposition, bans/moratoria are now widespread e.g. in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Holland, and in Australian, US and Canadian states such as Victoria, New Brunswick, Maryland and New York State, to name a few, below is a current extensive list.

   [https://keeptapwatersafe.org/global-bans-on-fracking/](https://keeptapwatersafe.org/global-bans-on-fracking/)

   Particularly when it:
   - ‘benefits the privileged few at the expense of ordinary, working people and communities’. It is well documented that the monies from shale gas go to the big corporations and are not rooted in the communities negatively affected environmentally and economically – particularly those economies based on rural tourism, country and outdoor sports and agriculture

   - Doesn’t encourage more people, from the UK and abroad, to visit more of England’s rural places, for longer and at all times of year
Fracking negatively alters the peace, tranquillity, environment, landscape and land use – damaging the distinctive way of life, reputation and attractiveness as a tourist or business destination, negatively affecting sustainable growth of the economy.


Fracking is a heavy industrialised process requiring hundreds of wells to be drilled to produce even 1% of the UK energy requirement; thousands of wells are required to produce meaningful quantities of gas. The intensity of drilling is like no other industry, hundreds of test wells are required to find the shale ‘sweet spots’ and with flow depleting within 18 months new wells are required constantly – the disturbance and destruction is widespread and with 24/7 drilling is dirty, dusty and constant - not the pristine environment tourists come to visit and spend time in. The US has 40 times the UK land area and 1/8th of its population density and yet the impact is substantial - here great swathes of the countryside, wildlife areas, agricultural land and tourist areas would be affected.

Fracking will result in a huge increase in heavy traffic on winding country roads and main tributaries. Each well requires thousands of tanker movements to and from sites carrying water, chemicals, sand and hazardous waste. Research papers have shown they clog roads, slow travel, cause queues, accidents, damage to roads, noise, fumes and air pollution. Travelling around rural areas will be far more difficult for tourists and business owners - and much less relaxing for that country drive. Who will choose to travel to rural businesses such as farms, shops and tourist attractions in areas of heavy industrialisation when other areas of the UK such as Wales, Scotland and NI are pristine and scenic?


Fracking has significant reputational issues globally and is banned or restricted by moratoria in many other countries. Health impacts are highlighted as one of the key reasons for moratoria and are now regularly reported in the global press. There are hundreds of peer reviewed research papers, all of these impact the global reputation of the area in which fracking occurs. Tourists have already started saying they would not return to Ryedale in Yorkshire if fracking occurs.

http://www.psehealthyenergy.org/site/view/1233

No amount of rhetoric from the Government relating to regulation will stop people voting with their feet, particularly when reports show even under best practice process fracking causes air and ground pollution, damage to the geology and aquifers, brings risk of accidents and leaks to name a few. The NY State Health Commissioner recommended a fracking ban in NY after a six-year study, and 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.”

http://concernedhealthny.org/compendium/
Fracking is highlighted as requiring specific regulation - not that in place for conventional gas extraction. New changes will reduce the independence of Natural England as a regulator and old regulations will allow fracking waste into our waterways, seas and/or underground in rural communities and agricultural food producing land. What impacts these will have are still unknown and indeed full implications may not be fully felt for decades to come. Below are links to UNEP views on regulation and a report on the current regulations in UK. http://www.unep.org/pdf/UNEP-GEAS_NOV_2012.pdf


http://elj.sagepub.com/content/17/1/8.full.pdf+html


If fracking were allowed across the English countryside, many people would be discouraged from visiting or setting up business because of changing reputation, vistas and health concerns for themselves and their families.

- Fracking also brings with it the threat of water contamination through leaking wells, surface spills or other above-ground accidents which could and have polluted streams, rivers and other water courses. Any water contamination incidents and resultant publicity would result in a drop in tourists visiting that area and again negatively affect the reputation of both the region and any food produced within that region.
  - Fracking is extremely unpopular with the UK and global public, as attested to by the number of bans and moratoria worldwide. Only 21% of the UK population surveyed support fracking according to the latest Government Wave 18 survey. People are unlikely to want to have a peaceful or active rural holiday or set up business in a fracking area reducing tourist numbers and growth.

- Doesn’t ensure visitors' experiences are balanced with the need to preserve the environment and the character of local communities.
  - Our nation’s protected areas, 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 national and international visitors every year. As well as attracting businesses to set up in those areas. Fracking within these protected areas is only restricted by planning conditions and government policy statements, current legislation allows well-pads to be situated just outside of protected areas and horizontal drilling
takes place under them – wells will ‘doughnut’ areas, significantly impacting visual amenity, access, special character, destroying the environment and affecting wildlife and wildlife tourism, as well as the yet unknown geological and pollution impacts.

- Large numbers of tourists visit the English countryside to enjoy the environment and the wildlife that lives there. Widespread fracking will damage wildlife populations and behaviour, particularly if fracking wells are situated around the edges of protected areas like SSSIs. Drilling and fracking at night will affect protected nocturnal species such as owls and bats.

- This loss of wildlife will have a damaging effect on wildlife tourism in rural areas and a consequent drop in visitor numbers.

- Millions of acres of England’s most precious landscapes are already licenced for fracking, with PEDL (Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences) covering vast areas of the country.

- Doesn’t support farmers and rural residents to diversify into tourism and grow their businesses
  
  - Fracking is a specialised industry dominated by huge corporations that rarely reside in the affected areas, the industry doesn’t invest wealth sustainably in communities or offer opportunities for sustainable small business growth, rather returns to old boom and bust – damaging underlying economies and smothering diversified growth
  
  - Jobs are of a specialist nature bringing waves of migrant workers who are not rooted or invested in the community or the landscape, local jobs are low, approx. 4 per well according to research. Fracking doesn’t add sustainable jobs into the economy in anything like the numbers of jobs claimed by the Industry or those which would be lost in already existing sustainable businesses and tourism. [http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140988314002540](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140988314002540) [http://www.multistateshale.org/shale-employment-report](http://www.multistateshale.org/shale-employment-report)

Tourism provides millions of permanent jobs for the rural economy (over 3.1 million in 2013, according to Visit Britain). 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.

Migrant workers take up tourist and low rent accommodation crowding out visitors and locals from the local area.

- Rural economies depend on farming and food production as well as tourism and Yorkshire is well known for its high-quality artisan produce, local food fairs, farmers’ markets, food trails, restaurants, bakeries, butchers etc. Many farmers rely on the income from food production and tourism on their farms. The impact fracking has on the reputation of an areas food production, ability to conform to
organic accreditations, volume of production etc. has been reported and discussed in parliament, and in reports that have led to bans elsewhere. 


http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/mps-raise-fears-about-impact-of-fracking-on-farms-and-water.htm

These concerns would have a significant impact on the perception of food produced and may result in lower sales, falling tourist numbers, and lower rural employment – in Australia reports show that for every 10 Shale jobs 18 are lost in agriculture.

- A United Nations Environmental Program Alert highlighted the risks inherent in fracking and highlighted it as not suitable for farming communities or population centres; and requiring new specific regulation – see above link
- Fracking has already been shown to have a negative effect on house, land and property prices in fracking areas. The draft DEFRA Shale Gas Rural Economy Report link above says: "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" and the report from Bristol in Mortgage Introducer magazine found that properties near the only UK well ever fracked, Preese Hall, fell by 4%. A drop in property values is always a concern and I expect people will be reluctant to invest in areas where fracking is taking place.

- Fracking is the subject of a growing body of evidence and negative global and national peer reviewed scientific papers as damaging to the local and global environment inc. global emissions, local economies, community cohesion and health

- and is completely at odds with the Local and LEP Plans.

5. Defra’s Role:
Defra’s own draft report recognises fracking as environmentally and economically damaging and would negatively impact tourist and agricultural businesses see link above

“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.” And "may reduce the number of visitors and tourists to the rural area, with an associated reduction in spend in the local tourism economy."

Defra has never completed or fully consulted on a comprehensive and independent report on the effect of fracking on the rural economy.

In my view fracking is a great threat to the sustainability and growth of rural communities, rural tourism and agriculture, if fracking is allowed to go ahead great swathes of previously pristine natural asset will be affected for years to come, indeed the long term impacts are unknown.

I ask this Committee to call for a moratorium on Fracking in the UK to allow a full independent review on the effect of fracking on the rural economy covering all available information and scientific papers globally and a full consultation with information shared across affected communities and regions.

I also ask this Committee requests the Government review its policies on supporting the shale gas industry and instead looks to invest some of those funds in sustainable growth for rural economies and renewable energy.

September 2016