I am a private individual who is very concerned about the government’s plans to promote fracking in the UK. We have spoken to many people both local and living elsewhere and every one, whatever their political beliefs, has thought that fracking will be a big mistake. It seems to be something that the conservative government is imposing on the North simply for short term financial gain, some for the exchequer but mostly for the foreign fracking companies.

The fracking companies have a history of creating:

- Community discord in areas where they impose their schemes, leading to health problems
- Ugly industrial processes and despoilation of the countryside in previously tranquil landscapes
- Imposing significant transport problems with huge and frequent lorry journeys on small rural roads
- The use of harmful chemical processes that can harm the local agricultural environment, the health local residents and permanently damage the local water resources
- All of the above will damage the existing rural employment, such as all the businesses involved in tourism such as hotels, B&Bs, pubs, shops, local food producers and many more. Leading to a reduction in payments to the treasury and increasing reliance on welfare payments and services.

The shale gas industry is a very frightening prospect for the ordinary people who live in the large area that is over shale and under threat from Blackpool to Hull.

It is hard to understand why a government would want to impose this on the country when they could be investing in developing and encouraging the provision of insulation in our homes and workplaces and renewable energy. Could the UK not be perfectly placed to become world leaders in the development of renewables? I think this imposition of fracking has the potential to be Theresa May’s poll tax. Look at the response to the votes in Kirby Misperton, the policy is being imposed by politicians and foreign fracking companies over the views of the locals. We will have an opportunity to vote out these councillors who have made this decision next year, but not before significant damage can be done to our county.

I agree with the following points:

1. **Fracking will result in the irreversible industrialisation of our countryside.**
   - Fracking is a heavy industrialised process unsuitable for the English countryside.
   - Tens of thousands of wells are required to produce meaningful quantities of gas.
   - England’s most precious landscapes are already licenced for fracking, with PEDL (Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences) covering vast areas of the country.
   - Shale gas companies are planning hundreds of wells per 10x10 km2 PEDL licence area.
   - Widespread industrialisation of the countryside for shale gas production is incompatible with EFRA’s aim of developing sustainable rural tourism.

2. **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 noisy 24-hour-a-day activities.
• Fracking will create noise, light and air pollution.
• A huge increase in HGV truck movements will make places less attractive for tourists.
• Visitors won’t want to spend their holidays in the shadow of a fracking well-site and will avoid fracking ‘blackspots’.
• Businesses close to a well-site, such as campsites, B&Bs, pubs, hotels, etc. will suffer a fall in visitor numbers.

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

• Each fracking well will require thousands of HGV movements to and from the site.
• Each fracking well-pad will have between 10 and 40 wells, which means tens of thousands of HGV trucks per well-pad.
• These trucks will cause noise and air pollution.
• There will be more queues, traffic accidents and damage to roads and verges.
• Travelling around rural areas will be far more difficult for tourists.
• This will impact on rural businesses such as farms, shops and small factories, all of which rely on prompt deliveries for their businesses to function effectively.
• The peace and quiet of the countryside and rural villages will be destroyed.

4. 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.
• These bans and moratoria are mainly 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.
• If fracking were allowed across the English countryside, many people would be discouraged from visiting because of health concerns for themselves and their families.

5. 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).
• Fracking would only provide a small number of short-term jobs at each well-site.
• 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.
• Most jobs on fracking well-sites would go to specialists brought in on fixed contracts, not local people.
- Fracking in the USA has been shown to be a boom-and-bust industry and does not create long-term jobs.
- Widespread fracking would threaten thousands of permanent jobs in the tourist industry, as visitor numbers would fall and businesses would close.

6. **Fracking will affect the reputation of food produced in tourist areas.**

- Rural economies depend on farming and food production as well as tourism.
- 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.
- The introduction of fracking in these areas may compromise the quality and reputation of locally produced food.
- There may also be the perception that food from farms grown near fracking wells could be contaminated.
- This will result in lower sales, falling tourist numbers, and lower rural employment.

7. **Our most treasured nature and wildlife sites are under threat from fracking.**

- 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 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 resulting noise, pollution and traffic would destroy the amenity of the country’s most precious and wildlife-rich natural places.
- This again would result in a dramatic fall in the number of tourists visiting the area.

8. **Fracking will negatively impact wildlife tourism in the countryside.**

- Large numbers of tourists visit the English countryside to enjoy the wildlife that lives there.
- Widespread fracking will have a very damaging effect on wildlife populations, particularly if fracking wells are situated around the edges of protected areas like SSSIs.
- 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.
- This loss of wildlife will have a damaging effect on wildlife tourism in rural areas and a consequent drop in visitor numbers.

9. **Water contamination from fracking could permanently impact an area’s reputation.**

- Fracking also brings with it the threat of water contamination through leaking wells, which could contaminate the aquifers that provide our drinking water.
• There may also be surface spills or other above-ground accidents, which could pollute streams, rivers and other water courses.
• Fracking companies are not required to post a bond with local councils to pay for environmental clean-up, if indeed such clean-up were possible.
• One incident of contaminated drinking water, or a catastrophic explosion at a well-site, would permanently damage the reputation of a popular tourist area for many years.
• Any water contamination incident would result in a drop in tourists visiting that area.

10. Fracking will 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.
• 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%.”
• 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 will 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.

11. Public perception of fracking is overwhelmingly negative.

• 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.

12. 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 unredacted report was finally published in July 2015, only because the government was forced 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.

Many people 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?

Like the other people we have met when investigating fracking, we are not involved in any political groups, just concerned to make the best of the country that we have. I believe that the shale gas industry may make a short-term injection of cash to the economy but at a huge cost to the health, welfare and livelihood of the people, landscape, infrastructure and economy of the region. The damage caused will far outweigh the benefits and it is just not a sensible decision.

It is also clear that widespread fracking will have a very damaging effect on tourism in rural areas.

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.

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