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 Halsall, West Lancashire, which is in an area that is currently threatened by fracking. It is divided by two licences one for Aurora and one for Cuadrilla.

I often visit Yorkshire and Cheshire too for days out and I understand that fracking is planned for these beautiful parts of the Country. I can’t imagine how awful it will be to see industry on such a scale as frack pads everywhere in our green fields and rolling hills. The effect on tourism in all these areas would be catastrophic.

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

In the places in the world that have endured the fracking process, the results have been very damaging. I have it first hand from my 20 year old granddaughter who lives in Brisbane, Queensland. She is also at the university there and as one of the campuses is near the fracking area of western Queensland, she has seen and heard about the devastation that has been caused to rural farmers, to their land, animals and drinking water. In fact now the fracking companies are being asked to provide millions of pounds in compensation to the landowner as they have lost their livelihood. Our countryside is on a much smaller scale than America and Australia. We have many small rural communities, whose livelihoods depend on farming and tourism. Once they are fracked there will be no going back. There is no way round this, as because as a well pad only lasts three or four years, more pads within three or four kilometres have to be drilled to enable the supply of gas to be continuous and profitable and eventually the area is covered in a network of pads, drill rigs and pipelines. I have seen internet night time aerial pictures of Fracking pads and rigs and pipelines all lit up. It is truly not what we want in our rural areas. How could we possibly have a viable tourist industry.

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

The Fracking process, is a very heavy dirty industry, and according to the planning applications I have seen for Lancashire, would take place right up to our villages and rural properties and rural businesses. The applicants also want to drill from dawn to dusk six days a week. The noise will be continuous and onerous for any persons or properties near bye. I am positive this will make those areas a no go one as far as the tourist trade goes. I live directly behind the seaside resort of Southport. The area immediately behind the town is in licences PDL 164 and 165. Thousands of visitors come to our town all year round, for the seaside, the leisure activities, and also the shopping on the famous Lord Street boulevard. We also have a four day Flower Show in August with exhibitors coming from all over the country. In the licence area too are animal farm parks for children, large Caravan Parks, fishing lakes and championship golf courses. We host the Open Golf Championship every seven years, and we are open to the whole of the world. Industry on the scale of Fracking would destroy the backdrop to Seaside towns. No one would wish to drive through gas fields either side of the three main roads leading from the inner towns and cities of Lancashire to the coast. Our plain is very flat and the visual effect would be ruinous. At present, we can see green fields, cropped fields, copses, farms and hamlets, completely unspoilt by any heavy industry.
Any rural businesses near the well pads would just not survive.

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. The state of Victoria in Australia has banned it also just this week.
- 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. Supermarkets will not risk buying produce from fracking areas.

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.

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.

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. Every Autumn our West Lancashire plain is visited by millions of overwintering birds. They fly into Martin Mere one of Sir Peter Scott’s Wildlife and Wetland Trust sites. Every Morning and evening they leave the Mere and fly out to the Liverpool Estuary to feed. They also stop on route on the fields where the crops have been removed and forage for food. I know as thousands of them fly over my property every day. It is an awesome sight. We have large flocks of geese and Whooper Swans coming over daily. Last year Cuadrilla had to cap the well drilled at Banks In West Lancs because of the overwintering birds.

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.

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 near Preston 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. It is already appearing on solicitors searches now.

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?

Conclusion

I conclude that the government must do all in its power to stop this dreadful industry, before it gets started. The whole fabric of our society depends on us keeping a viable, safe countryside for our town populations to come out and enjoy. So many of the licences issued for fracking are in the countryside and some of the most beautiful at that. We owe it to future generations to keep it safe and viable to work in, produce our food and open its doors to visitor who want to spend their leisure time and money at holiday time and weekends there for years to come.

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.

September 2016