I was born in Scarborough and while I left at 18 to go to college I returned in my forties like many Scarborians because I appreciate what a wonderful part of the country it is. Many people would agree and spend holidays in the town itself as well as the North York Moors National Park, Ryedale and the Vale of Pickering plus the Yorkshire Wolds. All these areas have been given targeted by Fracking companies. It is inconceivable to me that this beautiful area could be industrialised by wholesale fracking. In my opinion this dirty, polluting industry would be a disaster for rural communities who rely on tourism for their income. People will not want to come when the real impact of fracking becomes apparent. They will meet congested rural roads full of tankers taking fracking water to and from wells. There will be noise, air and light pollution. If fracking really gets going there will be hundreds of wells in order to make it profitable. The process will completely industrialise the rural landscape resulting in reduced tourism and the loss of vital income. Recent studies have also highlighted the amount of stress that just the possibility of fracking can induce in local communities. Remember the Grand depart bike race and the Tour de Yorkshire with those images taken from the air showing what a wonderful place North Yorkshire is to live in. Now imagine the same images showing fracking wells and all the infrastructure that goes with it. Disaster for tourism. Why is fracking being banned in Holland, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Parts of the US and Australia? They realise the negative impact it has on people and communities. How can it be compatible with tourism? Don’t imagine fracking will bring permanent jobs. It is a boom and bust industry which will harm already established rural industry. North Yorkshire is proud of it’s reputation for good quality food. This will be compromised by fracking. There is a real threat of water contamination in fracking zones both to surface water and Aquifers which supply drinking water to Scarborough and district and the Driffield area. One serious incident will result in people staying away. There is a threat to wildlife around fracking wells from noise, light and water pollution. Recent surveys show that fracking is viewed negatively by the public so they would be less likely to holiday where fracking is taking place. Your own Defra report of July 2015 acknowledged the negative that fracking would have on Rural economies.

Conclusion

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.

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