

NEW MINERALS PLAN FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE WILL ALLOW INTENSIVE FRACKING

What is the plan?

The new Minerals and Waste Joint Plan has been agreed between North Yorkshire County Council, the North York Moors National Park and York City Council. Its present version is out for public consultation up until 5pm on Wednesday 21st December 2016 and can be viewed online at: www.northyorks.gov.uk/mwconsult. The plan is to act as guidance in making planning decisions up to 2030 relating to things like quarrying and disposal of its waste.

For the first time ever the plan includes guidelines for the development of a shale gas (fracking) industry.

What are the good things in the plan?

In line with the Infrastructure Act 2015, National Parks and AONBs will be protected from surface drilling but may be drilled horizontally under the park from outside the boundary. The plan introduces a 3.5km 'buffer zone' in which development must not have a 'landscape impact', e.g. be visible from the protected areas. As a cautionary note, large parts of these areas are still covered in Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences (PEDLs) and **protection against fracking is not guaranteed**. Several other designated areas will have some protection e.g. areas within the Historic Setting of York, SSSIs and RAMSAR Sites.

Other good points are that no lower water volume limit will be adopted in defining hydraulic fracturing and sites with good access to A and B roads will be preferred.

What is most worrying about the plan?

The remaining areas of North Yorkshire not enjoying any kind of protection will be the main targets of the oil and gas industry. Extensive fracking could result ultimately in the formation of a 'sacrifice zone'.

The standard PEDL area is a square 10km x 10km (approx. 6 x 6 miles) and the plan would allow up to ten well sites (or well pads) in this area. Each well-site could be allowed numerous wells – possibly up to 40 or 50 – although no upper limit has been set. A large number of wells would require a lot of infrastructure such as access roads, pipelines, processing plant and compressor stations.

How near could a well site be to my house, school or business?

The plan proposes a minimum set back distance of 500m between well pads and residences. This is naively based on experience with wind farms, which are very different from fracked wells. There is no reference to increased set back distances for schools, hospitals, old people's homes, or the boundaries of settlements.

If a gas field were made up of several 10 x 10 km blocks and the 10 well sites were evenly spaced, then no wellsite would be further away than 2.3km, and could be as close as 500m.

What has the industry proposed?

Set back distances as little as 400m. The largest licence holder INEOS are publicly talking of 10 well sites per 10 x 10km licence area. Furthermore, they would like to have 10 or more wells on each site. However this is only the start, INEOS have revealed that without obstacles, a 10 x 10km block could have 30 well sites with 12-14 wells on each site producing a total of 396 wells. Although since retracted, this pattern of intensive fracking is consistent with the US industry practice of 'spacial intensity' already seen in some parts of the US such as Texas. This is deemed necessary to fully recover as much oil and gas as possible from a productive shale layer.

INEOS have also indicated that they intend to use most of the hydrocarbons recovered in their own manufacturing business as a feedstock, rather than providing gas for public use via the national gas pipeline system.

What has happened so far with planning applications related to fracking?

In North Yorkshire, Third Energy have obtained permission to frack their KM8 well at Kirby Misperton. Three properties lie within 500m of the site and the whole of the village, several tourism businesses and North Yorkshire's largest tourism revenue earner, Flamingoland, all lie within 1km. All works traffic would need to pass through the village.

In Lancashire, Cuadrilla's Preston New Road site approved for fracking by the Secretary of State lies on a greenfield agricultural site with 3 residences positioned within 500m of the site and two villages within 1km. The Roseacre Wood site is a greenfield agricultural site within 500m of a village. The traffic route on country roads had led to refusal but this is to be re-examined by the Secretary of State, with a view to approving fracking.

In Nottinghamshire, I Gas have obtained permission for exploratory drilling into shale at Misson. The site has a property within 500m and is only 150m from a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

This shows what can happen in the absence of such guidelines and the dangers facing anyone in a licence area.

Why should I be concerned by all this?

Being close to a fracking site could have many drawbacks;

- Heavy traffic, particularly HGVs on nearby roads.
- Noise, air and light pollution.
- Contamination of surface water or below ground water sources.
- Serious health risks to people and animals.
- Damage to community life.
- Property reducing in value or becoming unsaleable.
- Increased cost of, or difficulty in obtaining, property insurance.
- Change of character of an area from tourism and agriculture to an industrial landscape.

How can I respond?

The plan is open for consultation until **5pm Wednesday 21st December 2016**. At this stage in the plan, public opinions are being sought on the soundness and legality of the document.

★ Please find out how to respond at

www.frackfreeryedale.org/mwjpconsultation

★ If you would like to know more or are concerned about fracking in general, please visit

www.frackfreeryedale.org

★ Join a local frack-free group. If you're not sure which one is near you, please email frackfreeryedale@gmail.com and we'll point you in the right direction.

★ You can also write to your MP, councillors and the press to express your concern about fracking in Yorkshire.