

## FRIENDS OF THE PEAK DISTRICT/CPRE SOUTH YORKSHIRE FRACKING POLICY

### **Our position**

With stringent climate change targets, re-endorsed globally and strengthened at the UN COP21 meeting in Paris in December 2015, the focus of energy policy and investment must be on developing low carbon sources, not further exploitation of fossil fuels. In our view, developing a significant shale gas sector in the UK will not assist in, and would positively damage, the necessary transition to a low carbon energy mix.

Fracking in open countryside locations would be very damaging to amenity and the environment and is fundamentally unsuited to a small, crowded island; it is probably unachievable on a large scale through the application of the current English planning system. We are also clear that fracking, even at depths greater than 1200m, under national parks, SSSIs and other nationally designated sites, is unacceptable on a precautionary basis as the risks are currently unknown.

For these reasons FPD and CPRE SY, whilst examining each application on its merits, will operate a presumption against the development of fracking in the Peak District and South Yorkshire.

This is consistent with our main aim of protecting the countryside against threats to its landscape, tranquillity and character, married to our vision of a countryside where energy demand is low and sustainable, so that it and its communities can cope with and adapt to future climate change.

### **Rationale**

1. The development of hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') for shale gas in the UK is currently the most controversial energy/environmental issue facing rural areas. The current Government strongly supports the development of a UK shale gas industry and has put in place a licensing and regulatory regime to allow exploitation of what is estimated to be a significant resource, although opinion divides as to what the extent of proven and extractable reserves may be.
2. Much of the resource underlies upland northern Britain, including the Peak District and South Yorkshire. Extraction licences have recently been issued in our area and secondary legislation to permit fracking at depth under protected areas (such as SSSIs and national parks) was approved in December 2015, despite strong objections from FPD/CPRE SY, the Campaign for National Parks and CPRE nationally.
3. Nationally, CPRE developed a policy guidance note in November 2013 which set out three main criteria for judging the acceptability of exploration for and exploitation of shale gas:-
  - Shale gas sites do not harm the beauty and tranquillity of the English countryside;

- Natural resources of the countryside, especially water, are not polluted or used unsustainably; and
  - It can be demonstrated how the exploitation of shale gas contributes towards meeting our climate change targets.
4. Whilst the first two criteria need to be tested against the detail of individual applications, recent energy modelling undertaken to test the viability of meeting current UK climate change targets shows that increased renewables, ambitious targets for reducing electricity demand, increased energy efficiency, and increased European grid interconnectivity are the necessary steps to reducing emissions and averting climate change risks. The role of gas as a transition fuel appears limited in such scenarios.
  5. Some consideration can legitimately be given to energy security issues (and potentially positive balance-of-payment arguments) for the UK but we already exist within a global energy market and its volatility has not yet threatened UK energy supply. Furthermore without binding energy policy in the UK (including decarbonisation targets; control of market behaviours), there is little chance that shale gas will displace other fossil fuels. Thus its claim to fulfil a 'bridging' role in the transition to a low carbon economy is weak.

#### **How we will operate this policy**

6. We will continue to monitor the local development of shale gas licence areas and work with local organisations and communities, in both the Peak District, South Yorkshire and adjacent areas. We will rigorously examine and comment on any significant development for shale gas, set against the position and criteria in this policy.
7. This policy should be read in conjunction with our existing Climate Change and Energy policy (December 2012), of which it forms a sub-policy.

Adopted June 2016  
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