

Matter 9 Hearing Statement – Sastra Rothfield

2. Are the constraints on production and processing of oil and gas within the PEDL areas adequately addressed so as to guide planning applications?

3. In particular, noting the complex geology of the Mendip Hills, is sufficient guidance and protection provided to a) the geological structure of the area, and b) groundwater?

4. Should Policy SMP7 include a requirement for the process of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be undertaken and submission of an Environmental Statement (ES)?

5. If so, should all applications for oil and gas exploration, appraisal and production be supported by EIA and an ES or should there be exceptions? Please give reasons.

I want to refer all 4 statements in one answer if I may. In the UK we are lucky in that we have evidence of the multitude of terrible impacts that mineral energy extraction has had on the people, and on the environment in the US and Australia. There have been countless pieces of evidence, lists of harmed citizens, and more recently court cases won, by people who have been majorly adversely affected. These are some, but by no means all of the problems we have seen in the gasfields of the US and Australia: Increased cancers, still born animals, babies with birth defects, breast cancer, breathing difficulties, increased cancer in children, water shortages, contaminated water, noise pollution, light pollution, extreme road use from trucks, houses and land being devalued, earthquakes, sinkholes appearing.

All the effects I have mentioned have been documented and written about in many articles. It is easy to access this information. Therefore I find the present governments rhetoric about how fracking is safe, and that with the correct controls, regulation and checks, fracking can be safely carried out in the UK very alarming. We know this to be an absolute lie. The government's denial of the truth is very concerning. Over the last few years many laws have been changed to make mineral extraction and the gaining of drilling permission easier. Financial incentives have been huge for companies wanting to pursue this. All this despite ever increasing mistrust of the practice. At present 78% of the UK do not want fracking to go ahead. Yet we are having this

practice forced upon us. Only recently The Government's own report on fracking was heavily redacted, with many points not revealed to the public. Why have they censored their own report? More proof that they are fully aware of what can and will go wrong but for some reason they are pushing for this. Maybe we should look at the Government's advisers, so many have links with the oil and gas industry. The advice is biased, so a few can make a lot of money fast and leave the residents of areas fracked with lives not worth living.

Most recently a law has been passed that has made fracking companies not responsible for clean up operations when wells leak or other environmental contamination occurs. This cost is passed on to the local council and the fracking company, despite having caused the catastrophe, made a great deal of money for a few, then leaves and we are left to deal with the mess. Once contamination occurs there is no hope of cleaning up the water supply. It is ruined forever. Can you imagine a time in the future where we have to have our water delivered by truck as the groundwater has been poisoned, or we have run out of water as the fracking companies have caused water shortages. This is happening in many towns in Texas, they have simply run out of water because they have been fracked. As we know fracking uses huge amounts of water to run its operations. What happens to this contaminated, radioactive waste when they have finished with it? Where does it get dumped? How does it get removed? When wells are dug, they eventually dry up and another well needs to be dug. The land can never be used again for anything. So the next well is dug and the next, like a virus spreading across our land, eating up land and resources and leaving the land forever scarred and unusable. Is this what we want to leave as a legacy for our children. When I drive around Somerset I constantly am awed at its beauty. We cannot compromise on this. We know the outcome of energy mineral extraction. In France and Germany they have banned fracking outright. Yet our Government has invited French companies here to frack our land.

There can be no safe regulation, safe limits or monitoring. The only course we can take is one of moratorium. I ask that we take this stance, at least until a full and open debate within the UK has taken place. Remember once fracking happens we can never go back. I could write for many more pages about the negative impacts and will happily provide evidence for the claims.

6. Has sufficient account been taken of viability?

There have been many wrongful claims about the amount of jobs and cheaper gas, Two days ago a pro fracking advert was banned by the advertising standards authority for misleading the public. Not the first time they have been caught out with lies about the benefits. The truth is only the investors will make money, local people will not. Tourism, agriculture, health will all be majorly, irrevocable affected. As a county we will not benefit.

11. Does transport of energy minerals need to be addressed separately and in addition to the general Development Management policy on Transport?

In a recent report 1 well would require 4000 truck visits in the early development of a frack field. These large vehicles will often be carrying toxic waste. What happens if they have an accident, who pays for the clean up of the roads? As mentioned above it won't be the fracking companies. It will us the tax payer and the council. We do not need more traffic on our roads. Not only will fracking contaminate the soil and water, the air with it methane leaks and burning off of gas, it will also cause traffic pollution with these multitude of trucks on our roads.

As a County and a Country we need to declare ourselves frack free. This is our land, our homes, our businesses, our lives. We cannot have a group, who will not be negatively effected enforce this practice on us. I ask that we make a stand for the future of our children. In years to come we will be so proud we stood up and said no, please let it not be that in years to come we morn the decision to allow mineral extraction in Somerset. We are at a cross roads now that will be the making or breaking of us. Please let us take the right path and ban this unnecessary and evil practice today.