

EIP additional submission February 2019

From Peter Allen representing Gilling East Parish Council

The area covered by The North Yorkshire Minerals and Waste Joint Plan (NYMWJP) took on an increased significance at the end of January, when two of the three areas where licences have been granted for fracking in the county appeared in the top ten of the best places to live in the UK. The survey carried out by the Halifax put Hambleton in fourth place and Ryedale eighth. Amongst other things the survey looked at the labour market, the housing market, the environment and personal wellbeing.

Claims that fracking will create jobs, presumably where few exist, are clearly fallacious in these parts of North Yorkshire.

The quality of the environment is exceptional and anything threatening to damage it would be irresponsible. No amount of Environment Agency reports saying that no harm can be done by fracking, can mitigate against human error or mechanical failure.

Within the context of the issues at stake in the additional EIP days, there is the 500m setback. Most of the debate has been over the level of noise from the site. The nature of fracking means that if noise is to be reduced, large obtrusive barriers are erected. Because many wells are drilled on each pad, this means that such barriers would either remain erected over a period of years, if not decades, or be subject to continual demolition and re-erection with the resultant increase in traffic. This is in addition to the huge number of heavy goods vehicle movements required to build a well. Traffic noise and inconvenience is a real threat to the 'personal wellbeing' of the area. Simon Stephenson quoted The Highways Agency's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges in a submission he prepared for Cornwall County Council in 2010.

"It seems clear that people living in a previously quiet area will continue to notice the excess noise caused by traffic but people moving into the area will take account of it in making their choice of house."

Traffic is also therefore, a direct factor in the 'housing market.'

Finally, although the EIP is specific on certain issues, I think that it should consider the whole development of the industry in the wider energy debate. In the nine months since the inspector last met interested parties, the whole energy question has moved on and will continue to do so. We should consider what Greg Clarke said to Parliament on 19th January this year, in response to the withdrawal of Hitachi from the building of a nuclear power station in Anglesy, just eight months after his Ministerial Statement.

“Mr. Speaker, the economics of the energy market has changed significantly in recent years. The cost of renewables, such as off-shore wind, has fallen dramatically to the point where they now require very little public subsidy and soon will require none. We have also seen a strengthening in the pipeline of projects coming forward meaning that renewable energy may now not just be cheap but also readily available.”

Not once did he mention gas.

The industry argues that a 500m setback will sterilise the development of fracking. The reality is that market forces and the need to meet climate change targets are what will sterilise it. The county must be allowed to protect its local population as it sees fit, and not be forced into allowing ephemeral advantages to the industry to threaten the status of being one of the best places to live in the whole country.

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