



FRACKING IN KENT Policy Guidance Note May 2014

Fracking is a process developed in the US more than 50 years ago, for recovering hydrocarbons such as shale gas from solid rock. It uses a process called hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking', which involves pumping a mixture of water, sand and chemicals under very high pressure into vertical and horizontal boreholes. This process 'fractures' the surrounding rock and releases the gas (usually methane.)

In Kent, there is the very real possibility of numerous applications for test boreholes, mainly in the Weald and East Kent. If fracking is permitted the boreholes could be anything up to 1000 metres to penetrate the chalk and other geological formations covering the shale that can be found inter-bedded with other sediments in the Jurassic and coal measures sequences.

At CPRE Kent, while we prefer alternative energy sources, we accept that gas, especially with carbon dioxide capture, is preferable to coal. In addition, we are increasingly reliant on imported gas which both economically and politically may cause problems in the future. In Kent, however, there are particular geological conditions which make fracking of great concern.

The chalk of the North Downs accounts for more than 70% of Kent's water supply and there are at least 20 water company boreholes within the areas being considered for fracking. Any number of these could be affected by the irreversible migration of contaminated groundwater through either negligence or release of gas into underground aquifers due to geological faults. In the Weald, there are vertical faults in the rock which would make water contamination even more possible.

Fracking also uses huge amounts of water – it is estimated that just one site would use a total daily amount equal to that of 5000 consumers, the size of a small village. Kent, however, is classified by the Environment Agency as 'seriously water stressed'.

Any applications for test boreholes will be carefully scrutinised by the experts on CPRE Kent's Environment Committee and by local District Committees. We will campaign to ensure that the safety and the beauty of the Kent countryside is never compromised and will examine closely the effects on wildlife, transport, tranquillity, air quality and water supplies. We will engage with local and national agencies and with industry operators to prevent or at least minimise unacceptable impacts on our beautiful Kent countryside.

The Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

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