

## **SHALE GAS IN THE HOWARDIAN HILLS AONB – INFORMATION NOTE 1**

A British Geological Survey report published in 2013 suggests that the geology beneath the AONB may contain shale gas resources. It indicates that shale rock which may be suitable for hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') is likely to exist between 1,500 and 4,000 metres below the ground surface.

The following information is a brief overview of the various steps of the process of extracting shale gas commercially, the regulatory permissions required and the planning policy restrictions:

### **3D seismic survey**

- Produces detailed information on the below-ground rock strata and formations.
- Doesn't indicate whether hydrocarbon reserves are present or not.
- Requires access permission from individual landowners but doesn't require planning permission from the Minerals Planning Authority (North Yorkshire County Council).
- This is what was carried out in the AONB by Tesla Exploration Ltd in August 2014.

### **Exploration/Appraisal**

- Involves the drilling of a test well/s on one specific site, to investigate details of the geology, the likely amounts of hydrocarbons available and the economic viability of production. Fracking may or may not be involved.
- Each site would require an application for planning permission and would need to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment. This includes consideration of issues such as visual impact, effects on the natural environment, effects on local amenity and level of vehicle movements. As part of the planning application process there is an opportunity for members of the public to comment on the application.
- The Environment Agency is responsible for issuing and monitoring permits relating to water use, protecting water quality, the use of chemicals and the management of waste water. A permit will not be issued if it is considered that the activity would pose an unacceptable risk to the environment.
- The Health and Safety Executive is responsible for regulating and monitoring the safety of the well and the site.

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## **Production**

- Likely to involve multiple sites, with a number of individual wells on each site.
- Each site and each well would require an application for planning permission and would need to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (see details above).
- The Environment Agency is responsible for issuing and monitoring environmental permits (see details above).
- The Health and Safety Executive role is also as detailed above.

**It cannot automatically be assumed that each step will proceed, or that planning permission/other consents granted for one phase will be granted for subsequent phases.**

## **National Planning policy**

- All minerals-related developments in the AONB are likely to be considered as Major Development.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that Major Development in AONBs should not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances and where it is in the public interest.
- A recent Government announcement has confirmed this guidance.

## **AONB Management Plan**

- Objective D4.1 of the 2014-19 Plan states that any large scale minerals-working operations should be resisted if they are not compatible with AONB objectives.
- All planning applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, against national planning policy guidance and AONB Management Plan Objectives.

## **More information**

A significant amount of information on shale gas and fracking is available on the internet, and is increasing all the time. Sources include:

- The British Geological Survey Report on shale gas in the North of England - [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/226874/BGS\\_DECC\\_BowlandShaleGasReport\\_MAIN\\_REPORT.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/226874/BGS_DECC_BowlandShaleGasReport_MAIN_REPORT.pdf)
- Further information on the fracking process – [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/268017/About\\_shale\\_gas\\_and\\_hydraulic\\_fracturing\\_Dec\\_2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/268017/About_shale_gas_and_hydraulic_fracturing_Dec_2013.pdf)
- The Minerals & Waste Joint Plan policies that apply to the AONB – <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/26218/Minerals-and-waste-joint-plan>
- The website of Third Energy, the holder of the Petroleum Exploration and Development Licence for the Ryedale area – <http://www.third-energy.com/>
- Frack Free Ryedale – <http://frackfreeryedale.org/>
- Other information available on the AONB website – <http://www.howardianhills.org.uk/library/guidance-and-information-notes/>