



UK government consultation on fracking planning permission

A briefing for Friends

August 2018

The government is proposing to grant 'permitted development' rights for exploratory drilling for shale. This would allow the government to take control of allowing fracking applications, rather than local councils. The proposal to grant permitted development rights for exploratory drilling is out for consultation until 25 October.

The impacts of fracking are one thing, but the biggest issue right now is that the government is trying to bypass the planning system and silence local opposition. Quakers in Britain will submit a formal response; we encourage Quakers to submit their own too. This briefing is designed to support you in crafting your own response.

[View the government's online consultation.](#)

While the consultation looks technical, you don't have to answer every question. The most important are question 2, which is a yes/no question asking whether you approve of the proposal, and question 3c, which asks whether there are types of land where permitted development rights should *not* be granted. Responses can be submitted via the link above or emailed to shaleconsultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk.



Useful points to include when responding to the consultation

It's a misuse of planning law

Permitted development exists to make it easier to carry out small, uncontroversial building projects, like putting up a garden shed. It was not designed for major industrial operations. Drilling for shale is one of the most contentious political issues of today – applications to drill in the Fylde area of Lancashire prompted more than 27,000 objections.

It's inconsistent

Since 2015, planning policy has made it almost impossible to get permission for onshore wind energy schemes. As a result, there has been a 94% drop in onshore wind planning applications in England. This is a clear case of double standards when compared to the proposed approach to fracking.

Key ministers oppose the plans

The Housing, Communities and Local Government select committee recommended that fracking [should not become permitted development](#).

The Committee Chair, Clive Betts, said: "Taking decision-making powers away from local planning authorities would be a backward step. It would remove the important link between fracking applications and Local Plans and be hugely harmful to local democracy and the principles and spirit of localism. It is Mineral Planning Authorities that have the knowledge of their areas needed to judge the impacts of fracking, not ministers sitting in Whitehall."

The Local Government Association opposes the plans.

[It said](#): "People living near fracking sites - who are most affected by them - have a right to be heard. Local planning procedure exists for a reason, to ensure a thorough and detailed consultation with those communities."



Alert your council to the consultation

You may also want to ask your local council to oppose the government's plans. The plans to bypass the local planning process would undermine councils and be a major blow to local democracy, so getting them onside is a good place to start. It's best to write to the council with responsibility for minerals, which is usually the **county** council. You could write to the leader of the council, as a meeting or as an individual; or you might want to ask a question at a council meeting. Each council has its own procedure for this, but most councils allow members of the public to ask a question if they submit it in writing a few days before the meeting. Check your council's website to find out the rules.

We've drafted a suggested question to help you get started - feel free to adapt it to your local circumstances.

Suggested question for your council

"The government is currently consulting on plans to allow shale gas exploration to proceed without the need for planning permission, and to give powers to decide full fracking applications to the Secretary of State instead of local authorities. Fracking is one of the most contentious political issues of today – applications to drill in the Fylde area of Lancashire prompted more than 27,000 objections. Permitted development rights were designed to make it easier to do things like put up a garden shed, not to silence public opposition to major industrial schemes.

"Does the leader of the council agree that these proposals represent an unacceptable attempt to bypass local democracy? Will the council submit a consultation response objecting to the plans?"

Good luck with your campaigning efforts – please let us know of any actions you take and any responses received! Email Sustainability & Peace Programme Manager

Chris Walker at chrisw@quaker.org.uk.