

Stocksbridge Community Forum
Meeting at The Venue on Wednesday 25th May 2016

Chair: Barbara Horsman 288 8394 Vice Chair: Graham Helliwell 288 2498
www.stocksbridgecommunity.org email bob@stocksbridgecommunity.org

Present: 75 attendees – names available on request

Apologies: Richard Crowther

Fracking – Dave Burley

Barbara welcomed Dave Burley to the Forum meeting who explained that he was a science teacher, non-political and encourages everyone to make their own investigations into fracking.

Dave showed a shale area map and explained how the areas were broken down into mining blocks, the licenses for which are then sold by the Government.

Dave explained that the fracking process involved drilling around 3km down into the ground, the hole into which water (plus other materials) is forced down at high pressure (around 10k psi) in order to cause fractures in the rock, which in turn releases gas.

Unlike natural gas when extracted, shale gas is not under pressure, which means that many wells are needed.

Dave then showed details of an area in the USA where 3000 wells had been drilled in a 50 x 75 mile area of unpopulated land

Dave then told the Forum of the main advantages stated for fracking but explained that he thought it was unlikely that energy prices would decrease with the extraction of shale gas here as it has in the USA as the UK exports gas. It is thought that the scale at which the UK would be able to extract the gas would have little impact on energy security – ensuring an energy resource for the future and the numbers of potential jobs that could be created greatly inflated to include many indirect jobs (such as extra staff needed in a local shop etc). Dave also pointed out that the economy wouldn't even benefit from the Corporation Tax as much as anticipated due to lower levels of tax for fracking companies, not to mention the fact that most fracking companies are not UK based. Dave then went on to explain that the Community Benefit mentioned as a perk of fracking was misleading also as fracking wasn't classed as fracking if the water was of a different volume, meaning that the benefit wouldn't be paid out, nor if other criteria wasn't met such as the length of the well. The payment is only a voluntary agreement anyway so needn't be observed by fracking companies at all.

It has been suggested that 1% of the revenue from shale gas would go to nearby residents, but Dave showed the longer term costs of this such as lower house prices. The water that is used to frack was then discussed. 10k – 30k m³ water is needed per well. Unless the site is next to a water source, this means that around 750 40tonne tankers would need to drive to the site. The flow back of water is a lot less than what is pumped in (and nobody knows what happens to the water that doesn't come back) but as it contains chemicals and is radioactive from being underground, needs a lot of treatment. Dave then questioned whether water should be used in this way when it is scarce.

The proper extraction was then discussed with examples of failing/leaking wells given. When wells fail, methane escapes into the atmosphere which is a threat to the environment and human health.

The safety of sites was then inspected as Dave explained that there are only 6 well inspectors nationally and that companies self-certify with weekly reports. This led on to the issue of insurance as many companies don't cover damage to property related to fracking.

Questions were then asked by the Forum:

With all evidence against fracking, why is it still happening?

Money – small unknown companies buy an area license for relatively little in the hope that it will be a good area to frack, then it will be sold on for a massive amount to an energy company.

If it is done well/safely, do we want it?

No, we want green energy. The Government say that it is a bridge to carbon free but one could argue that it delays it too.

Can Local Authorities do anything to stop it?

Planning Committees are constantly reminded of the costs of Public Inquiries plus if appeals are lost then they could lose the right to make decisions at all. They can only stop companies fracking if they can find a valid reason to.

Can Local Plans influence decisions?

Public Health would have an impact on decisions.

How will we know when this is going to happen?

When a planning application is submitted, through local groups such as Frack Free South Yorkshire.

How many fracking sites are there so far?

There are several exploratory sites but none have been fracked yet but the first permission to frack was given on 23rd May in North Yorkshire.

What can people do?

Many people need to contact their MP (who is pro-fracking), Councillors, protest etc.

Everyone needs to stand up and fight it and lots of people around the country will support.

Everyone was encouraged to take posters and leaflets to distribute.

Facebook page: Frack Free Penistone & Stocksbridge

Email address: frackoff-frankie@hotmail.com

Website: www.frackfreesouthyorkshire.co.uk

Website: www.sheffieldagainstfracking.org.uk

Adverts:

Greave House Farm – Open Garden Event Sunday 17th July