

Motion: Fracking and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT)

Submitted by Councillor O'Brien.

Preamble

Having declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, Lewes District Council is committed to a just energy transition and to ambitious investments in the green infrastructure and industries that will create jobs and rapidly decarbonise our economy.

The construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure and expanded reliance on fossil fuels is at odds with these commitments.

Fracking (the hydraulic fracturing of bedrock to produce shale gas):

- relies on high levels of water use at a time of increasing drought risk;
- risks dangerous contamination of water aquifers and the creation of toxic waste water;
- risks earthquakes and subsidence;
- will increase heavy vehicle traffic using local roads; and
- will reduce the visual and biodiversity amenity of the areas of outstanding natural beauty and national park.

Fracking will also fail to provide relief to those struggling with soaring fuel bills, as no output will come on-stream in the short to medium-term, and the tiny contribution such activity would make to supplies would have almost no effect on the global markets in which these commodities are traded.

In September, the Government lifted the 2019 national moratorium on fracking, re-exposing communities to the threat and pollution of shale gas extraction. The moratorium has now been reinstated but remains just a moratorium “until further evidence is provided that it can be carried out safely here” rather than an outright ban. So, it is essential that communities strongly state their opposition to future attempts to reimpose fracking.

More widely, fossil fuels are not the right answer to our energy problems. The construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure and expanded reliance on fossil fuels exposes our climate and our communities to untenable risks to public health and safety. The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty initiative is a campaign for a global treaty to: end new fossil fuel exploration and expansion, phase out existing production in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and accelerate the transition to renewable energy and other reliable, cost-effective low-carbon solutions. It has been endorsed by the Vatican, the World Health Organisation, the European Parliament, Nobel laureates, academics, and a growing list of governments (local and national).

Motion

Therefore, the Council resolves:

- To oppose, as a matter of Council policy, any initiatives with an impact on Lewes District to develop fracking for shale gas and any other fossil-fuel extraction;
- To endorse the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty; and
- To instruct the Cabinet Member for Sustainability to write to UK government ministers and our local MPs to ask them to maintain the ban on fracking and to support the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.